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# COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE



This Communication Strategy is published within the framework of the Project “SCHE in Europe and the US: Addressing Social and Economic Needs”, Contract № n. 2008-434/001-001 CPT USPOLL, with the financial support of European Commission in the frame of Atlantis Programme, EU-US Cooperation in Higher Education and Vocational Training. This Communication Strategy reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

## SCHE in Europe and the US: Addressing Social and Economic Needs

# Communication Strategy International University College

Adopted on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, at a working meeting of the Project team

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This Communication Strategy is an integral part of the management strategy for the implementation of the Project **“SCHE in Europe and the US: Addressing Social and Economic Needs”** for the activities to be implemented by International University College (Dobrich, Bulgaria), as the EU Project Leader. It is part of the continuous process of making and implementing decisions for promotion of research and education activities at different levels with the aim of achieving the Project objectives and ensuring sustainability of Project results. The Strategy is coherent with the predefined goal and objectives of the Project, as well as with the activity plan and timetable for the achievement of the defined Project results.

The Project **“SCHE in Europe and the US: Addressing Social and Economic Needs”** focuses on short-cycle higher education (SCHE) in Europe and the United States and its contribution to social and economic development at the regional, state, national and international levels. The Project aims at stimulating discussions and exchange of experience and best practices in three critical policy areas concerning SCHE: recognition and quality assurance of SCHE programs and degrees, interface between SCHE institutions and industry, and the role of SCHE in life-long and life-wide learning systems. In addition, the Project’s goal is to provide a forum for international exchange of ideas through the organization of three international conferences, each focusing on one of the above mentioned critical policy areas. Finally, the Project’s participants will conduct a feasibility study on transatlantic collaboration in the development of dual/joint SCHE degrees amongst participating institutions. The Project’s partners represent a group of successful, proactive institutions and organizations from both sides of the Atlantic that offer or are engaged with short cycle higher education programs.

## Purpose

Accordingly, the **purpose** of the present Strategy has been to raise public discussion on the attitude of stakeholders (higher education institutions, students, policy-makers, business) on issues related to SCHE in Bulgaria, and on SCHE perspectives regarding the current legislative basis in education. Further, the Strategy aims at structuring and systematizing stakeholders' views regarding the necessary public relation activities and regarding the activities necessary for the successful fulfillment of the Project objectives. Therefore the preparation of this Communication Strategy was preceded by analysis of the current state of higher education and of higher education policies and stakeholders in Bulgaria. International University College has developed this Communication Strategy as a support tool in the realization of the Project activities and as a means for arousing formal and informal discussions that would provide data and information for the preparation of the Project research outputs.

## Strategic principles

Several strategic principles guiding the implementation of the activities envisaged in the Communication Strategy are formulated with a view of achieving the Project objectives:

- Developing a team comprising staff members tasked with implementation of the Project
- Implementing the Project activities as partnership-driven initiatives
- Coordinating the different activities envisaged in the Communication Strategy
- Each publication or product has to be prepared with a clear audience and purpose in mind, and it should have a preliminary message and dissemination schedule
- Activities should always be based on already existing organizations and institutions.

The Communication Strategy also reflects the trends in the development of the Bulgarian education system, legislation, and labor market at national and regional level, as well as the business and employer demand for qualified labor force with specific professional characteristics. The Strategy is based on the objective economic and social situation and the available resources.

## Tasks

The Communication Strategy has four important tasks to accomplish:

- To make public presentation of the Project before the stakeholders in the higher education process in Bulgaria
  - To spread information and raise awareness about the prospects of SCHE
  - To gather feedback from stakeholders on the prospects for introduction of SCHE degrees in Bulgaria
  - To present the Project products and results
- The accomplishment of these tasks shall serve as an empirical input for the development of the research products produced by International University College within the framework of the Project.

## Milestones

In the process of planning and organizing the publicity events the following questions need to be considered:

- What research elements need to be discussed?
- What are our objectives?
- What groups of stakeholders would be interested in the topic of SCHE?
- What are the needs of our partners? What elements of our research are most interesting to them?
- What communication tools would be most effective when interacting with these interest groups?
- What is our timeframe?
- What financial and human resources are available for the publicity event?

The answers of these questions determine the individual approach to publicity events and activity, organized by the Project team in Bulgaria. Each publication or publicity product has to be prepared with a clear audience and purpose in mind, and it should have a preliminary dissemination plan and plans for organizing a promotional event. In this way it would be possible to achieve proper dissemination of the Project's message and researchers can rely on impartial feedback and attitude evaluation.

## Target groups and audiences

The target audiences are the groups or individuals at the local, national, or international level with whom you are seeking to develop a synergy and to share information. In the case of SCHE in Bulgaria, the broader target audience includes people aged 17+ as clients of education services, higher education institutions, VET centers, non-governmental organizations in the area of education, researchers, business entities, branch organizations, decision-makers at local, regional and national level in the field of education, etc.

- **For the direct beneficiaries and partners in the research**, the approach should be such as to ensure that the research results are perpetuated, that they serve as a model and that their impact in the field is extended.
- **For political decision-makers**, the approach should be such as to ensure that participatory development is better understood, adopted in other projects, and adapted to their needs.
- **For the development community, researchers and stakeholders**, the approach should be aimed at gaining visibility in the field, sharing the Project results, and developing exchanges on initiatives carried out with the target populations

## Key principles of implementation

- **Linkage between the messages that generate support for the successful implementation of the Project with the messages pertaining to the goals of higher education in Bulgaria.**

The content of the messages transmitted by each publication and event should take into account the Project objectives. This means that it is suitable to always explore the possibilities of including facts and information about Project activities into publications dealing with broader issues related to the higher education process in Bulgaria.

- **Coordination of all activities envisaged by the Communication Strategy with the relevant public bodies and institutions at the national level and at regional level**

The activities envisaged by this Strategy should always be coordinated and agreed upon with those public bodies and institutions at regional level and at national level that relate to the Project, its

financing or its monitoring and controlling. In any case the rules for visualization of the financial support awarded to the Project “SCHE in Europe and the US: Addressing Social and Economic Needs”, Contract № n. 2008-434/001-001 CPT USPOLI by the European Commission in the frame of Atlantis Programme, EU-US Cooperation in Higher Education and Vocational Training, shall be observed.

- **Pro-active rather than re-active activities**

A key principle on which the Strategy is based is that activities should be planned in a pro-active rather than in a re-active manner. We know what the interests are and what the goals are. We know who our partners are and what results we want to achieve. The messages that are being “transmitted” should be timed so that they open the way for the successful completion of them

agement activities that are being undertaken.

### Communication activities

The communication activities that will be undertaken in implementation of this Strategy are placed within five different areas, on the basis of audiences, messages, channels, as well as the approaches followed to achieve the goals

- Publicity and work with the media
- Informative events, opinion surveys, in-depth interviews and discussions with stakeholders from the sphere of higher education
- Informative events, opinion surveys, in-depth interviews and discussions with stakeholders from the sphere of higher education clients - young people aged 17+, students, VET trainees, youth leaders, youth NGOs
- Informative events, opinion surveys, in-depth interviews and discussions with stakeholders from the sphere of business - individual business entities, employers’ organizations, branch organizations
- Informative events, opinion surveys, in-depth interviews and discussions with interested policy-makers at local, regional and national level

Good communication involves a two-way dialogue, where we listen (what do our target groups want?), design and deliver audience-informed policies, and then gather feedback to assess our impact.



## Communication channels

The Communication Strategy of the Project “SCHE in Europe and the US: Addressing Social and Economic Needs” will be implemented via the following channels:

- Media channels

Newspapers such as:

- (1) 24 Chasa (Regional Issue for Northeast Bulgaria, Varna Center) - 7000 circulation, daily
- (2) Trud - 7 000 circulation, daily
- (3) Chernomore - 12 000 circulation, daily
- (4) Pozwanete (Regional Issue for Northeast Bulgaria, Varna Center) - 10 000 circulation, daily
- (5) Nova Dobrudzhanska Tribuna - 5000 circulation, daily

Television stations such as:

- (1) Dobrudzha TV
- (2) RTVC Varna, “More” Program
- (3) Ariel
- (4) MSAT
- (5) Varna Air TV
- (6) TV2 and bTV - Dobrich reports



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Radio stations such as:

- (1) Radio Varna
- (2) Radio Bravo
- (3) Darik Varna
- (4) Radio FM+
- (5) Radio Dobrudzha

Internet media such as:

- (1) [www.dir.bg](http://www.dir.bg)
- (2) [www.dnes.bg](http://www.dnes.bg)
- (3) [www.vesti.bg](http://www.vesti.bg)
- (4) [www.expert.bg](http://www.expert.bg)
- (5) [www.dnesplus.com](http://www.dnesplus.com)
- (6) [www.pozvanete.bg](http://www.pozvanete.bg)
- (7) [www.darik.net](http://www.darik.net)
- (8) [www.chernomore.bg](http://www.chernomore.bg)
- (9) [www.dnevnik.bg](http://www.dnevnik.bg)
- (10) [www.focus-news.net](http://www.focus-news.net)



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(11) [www.infovarna.com](http://www.infovarna.com)

(12) [www.varnatribune.com](http://www.varnatribune.com)

(13) [www.varna-news.com](http://www.varna-news.com)

(14) [www.actualno.com](http://www.actualno.com)

(15) [www.dobrich.com](http://www.dobrich.com)

(16) [www.dobrich.info](http://www.dobrich.info)

- Focus groups - in-depth interviews and opinion surveys

(1) Youth organizations

(2) Business branch organizations

(3) Education organizations

## Business organizations to be approached include:

- (1) Dobrich Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- (2) Varna Chamber of Commerce
- (3) Association for the Promotion of Rural and Eco-Tourism
- (4) Center for Civil Initiative and Education, Varna
- (5) Association “Europartners”, Dobrich
- (6) Agency for Regional Economic Development and Growth, Dobrich
- (7) Bulgarian Association of Hotel and Restaurant Managers
- (8) Alliance Francaise
- (9) individual hotels and restaurants

Local authorities, policy-makers and education stakeholders to be approached include:

- (1) Dobrich Municipality
- (2) Varna Municipality
- (3) Bourgas Municipality
- (4) Dobrich Region Government Administration
- (5) Varna Region Government Administration
- (6) Bourgas Region Government Administration
- (7) Regional Associations of the Local Authorities in Bulgaria and their expert commissions on education
- (8) Regional Education Inspectorates in Dobrich, Varna and Bourgas
- (9) Foundation “Modern Education”
- (10) International Management Institute
- (11) Association “Dobrich Agrarian and Business School”
- (12) Varna Technical University
- (13) Rousse Technical University
- (14) Bourgas College of Tourism
- (15) Varna College of Tourism
- (16) Varna University of Economics



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- (17) Professional High-school on Economics, Dobrich
- (18) Professional High-school on Economics, Varna
- (19) Professional High-school on Tourism, Dobrich
- (20) Professional High-school on Tourism, Varna



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