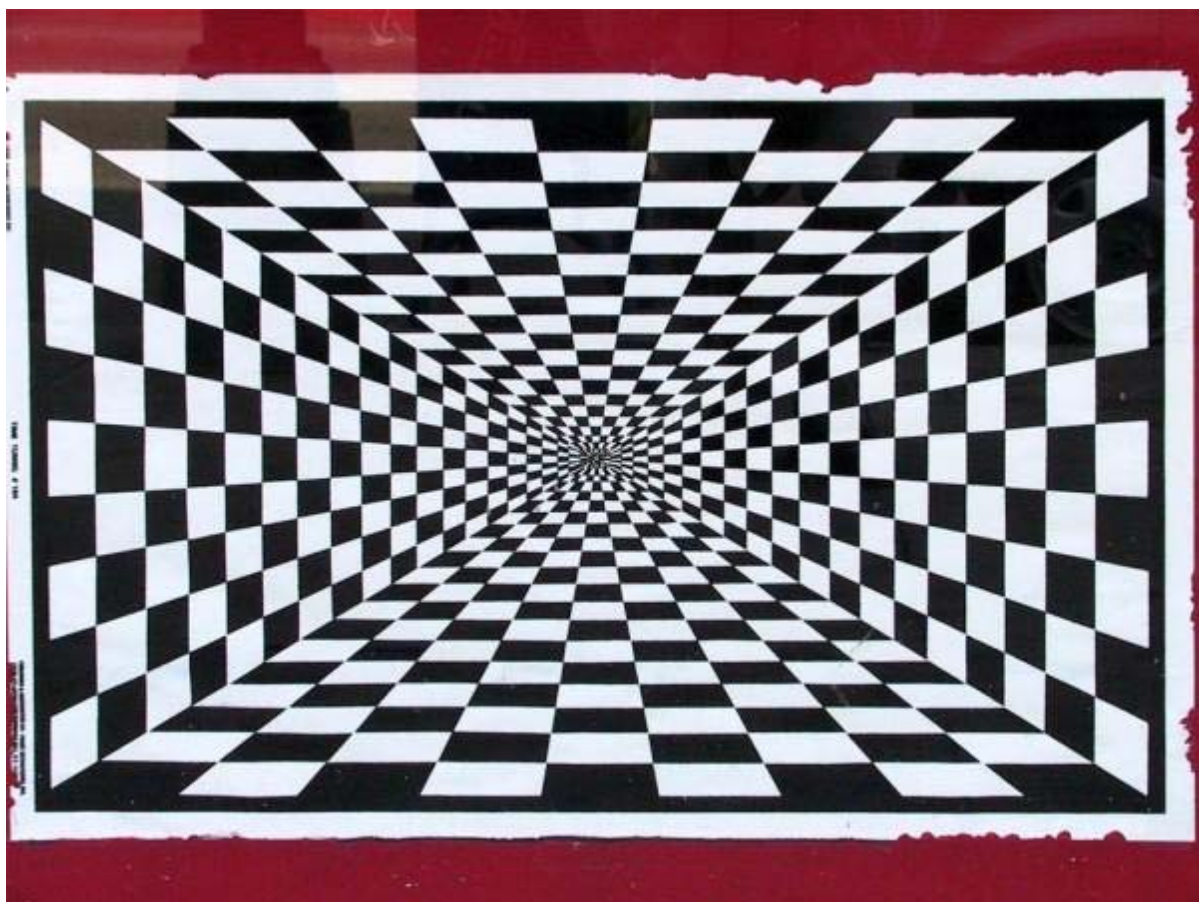




HANDBOOK

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

DOBRICH, 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Building strategic partnerships between universities and the impact of partnerships for the successful introduction and development of short-cycle education programmes in the higher education system has been a subject of discussion for several years now. In the Resolution 2009/2099 (INI) of 20 May 2010 on the new partnership for the modernization of the universities - a dialogue between universities and business, the European Parliament put an emphasis once again on the role of strategic partnerships between universities and businesses for development of economy of knowledge. Continuing dialogue and cooperation at local, regional, national and European level, including sharing of best practices regarding the programs and tools are essential to establish closer links and partnerships between universities and business societies. It will thus be easier to overcome cultural, institutional and operational barriers between them, which will help to create a knowledge-based society, the development of applied research and to ensure better prospects in the labor market for graduates.

This Handbook was prepared within the frame of the project "Short-term Education in the U.S. and Europe: Addressing the Social and Economic needs" in the 2008-2010 "Atlantis" program - EUROPE-US for cooperation in higher education and training. The project is funded by the European Commission, Contract №2008-2434/001-001.

The publication presents models of good practices at higher educational institutions and universities from Bulgaria and other European universities, as well as partner universities in the USA, established in the course of the project implementation, whose lead partner for Europe was the International University College (IUC), Dobrich, Bulgaria. The purpose of this Handbook is to make a comprehensive review of short-cycle education and to provide opportunities for initiating and maintaining strategic partnerships in the short-cycle training between institutions of higher education and educational institutions offering short forms of training.

IUC is a modern business school specializing in teaching Bachelor programs in the field of tourism, hospitality, business management and marketing. During the period since its founding in 1999, IUC has gone a long way in the process of internationalization. One of the purposes of this guide is not only to make a description of good practices relating to the establishing of various networks and partnerships, but also to outline possible directions for development as a result of these networks. Building a system of training programs within the short cycle higher education, leading to the acquisition of double degrees, represents a major challenge in Bulgaria today, not only because of the lack of regulations governing the status of short-term higher education, but also because of insufficient experience in creating programs leading to double and joint degrees. The idea of the team, gathered and described the best practices, presented in this guide, is this experience to be used as a basis for future projects on the development and establishment of programs leading to the acquisition of double degrees in the short-cycle higher education.

PART ONE

BEST PRACTICES IN THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING ACADEMIC COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS, WORKING FOR PROMOTION AND INTRODUCTION OF SHORT-CYCLE HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

1. Partnership between universities and business organizations in the field of short-cycle higher education

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) short-cycle higher education (SCHE) can be defined as *".... level or stage of training after secondary education which can lead to qualification recognized on the labor market, obtained in formal educational institutions - universities, technical schools, colleges, public and private - but also in a variety of other educational institutions, including secondary schools, workplace, through self-IT training or a number of public-private organizations."*

European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education includes **3 training cycles**:

- The first training cycle ends with obtaining 180 to 240 ECTS credits; as a result, a Bachelor's degree is awarded.
- The second cycle of qualification typically includes between 90 and 120 credits in ECTS, with a minimum of 60 credits accumulated at this level, leading to a Master's degree awarded upon course completion.
- The third cycle includes qualifications which do not accumulate educational credits; upon completion of these qualification courses, a doctoral degree is awarded.

The short-cycle higher education is roughly equivalent to 120 credits in ECTS. In most cases,

120 ECTS credits are accumulated within the two-year training course, and the allocation is 30 credits per semester. The program corresponds to **level 5** of the EQF in the first cycle of higher education.

Short-term vocational programs lead to a recognized professional qualification, enabling easy access to the labour market. Vocational training programmes offered by institutions of higher education, aims at encouraging young people to continue their education in later life, which is the main concept of the European lifelong learning. In countries where there are flexible learning models and established system for transferring from ISCED 5B to a higher level of education, the programs above are considered preparatory for further levels of education. Therefore, the innovative strategic partnerships between universities, colleges, educational institutions and business organizations play an extremely important role in achieving the goals of the short-cycle higher education.

According to the EP Resolution (2009/2099 (INI)) of 20 May 2010 "The heterogeneous nature of higher education institutions, businesses and types of cooperation, makes it difficult to agree on a single universal model of cooperation that would match the profile and priority requirements of each institution in Europe. It is particularly important in building partnerships to preserve the autonomy of universities and their ability to choose models for partnerships with businesses that best meet their objectives..."

There are many definitions of partnership, but the one quoted in this guide gives a short and clear definition of partnership. According to Lambert & Gardner¹ "*Partnership is a type of business relationship, adapted to the needs, based on mutual trust, openness, shared risk, and shared tangible benefits which build competitive advantage, leading to better business results, compared with what would be achieved by each company separately.* "

Based on the definition above, a successful partnership relies on **trust, openness, shared risk and shared material gain**. These are obviously the factors upon which depends most successful collaboration between all stakeholders in education. There are two main factors

¹ Source: Lambert & Gardner, 1999

contributing to the successful establishment of horizontal cooperation - TRUST and RESOURCES. Trust is equivalent to the mutual belief that the other side will not take unfair advantage of the partnership, but all parties will receive a fair share of the benefits of cooperation. Resources are equivalent to the mutual willingness, mutual commitment and ability to invest resources and capital to build cooperation. Main causes for instability and inefficiency of a partnership may be - *lack of trust and lack of resources*. There are several possible hypotheses for establishing a relation between trust and resources needed to build a partnership.

- If confidence and resources are scarce, cooperation is not sustainable. In this case, cooperation should aim at quick and simple projects.
- If confidence is high, but there is lack of resources, a clear focus should be set for successful partnership.
- If there are plenty of resources, but confidence is low, cooperation will benefit if there is a well established structure and clear rules.
- If confidence and resources are available, then there is a solid basis for implementation of complex or intensive joint projects.

Partnerships in higher education can be seen in various aspects. One of the possibilities for partnership is collaboration of university partner networks at horizontal and vertical level.

Horizontal cooperation between different stakeholders in the process of providing educational services is relevant mainly to partnerships between different types of educational institutions, which provide the same or equivalent degrees. It is collaboration between providers of educational services in the same market and at the same level in the chain of providers of educational services, which can be defined as building alliances between competitors. In terms of short-term higher education, horizontal cooperation between universities / colleges is crucial. The research and findings published in the Practical Guide of the Flemish Institute

for Logistics² indicate that horizontal partnerships are largely unstable, as partners appear to compete with each other and partnerships are influenced largely by external conditions. The main objectives for development of such partnerships can be:

- To improve cost effectiveness and reduce the share of operating costs by creating an opportunity to streamline and reorganize related activities;

- To create more new and high quality educational products, new curricula and to offer more favorable conditions for students – more opportunities and learning flexibility and better systems for acquiring information;

- To increase market share and to create conditions for equal admission of students, initiating partnerships between universities from different countries - encouraging the process of globalization and increasing the total number of students doing the same study programmes offered by partner schools.

- To apply new methods and approaches based on the experience of one of the partner universities, including possibilities of distance and e-learning for the implementation of innovative strategies;

- To achieve real synergy processes in which universities are complementary to each other, making benefit from their partners' strengths;

- To create conditions for greater flexibility and less dependence on external conditions through establishment of university networks;

- To create opportunities for better access to sources of information and better selection of prospective students - these are some of the social benefits resulting from establishing cooperation between universities offering similar or complementary courses.

² Source: LSP Spirit Project

Any partnership or cooperation between educational institutions results from one or more of these driving forces together with achievement of any of the purposes above. Successful horizontal cooperation between educational institutions is not uncommon. It is a process which can be well managed, planned and controlled.

The establishing of partnerships between higher education institutions at horizontal level, offering the same level of education, or partnerships between educational institutions and business organizations, NGOs and local authorities, goes through several phases:

1. *Strategic grouping* - setting strategic goals, partner search, analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the partnership, striving for cooperation;
2. *Forming a partnership* - determine the structure and vision of the partnership, choosing appropriate parameters of cooperation, carrying out a financial assessment and planning, establishing a formal agreement - a contract and a statute;
3. *Carrying out activities* towards establishing new organizations, building systems for control and monitoring.
4. *Control and management* - constant monitoring of work and setting a system of key indicators to evaluate performance.

One of the most common and widespread patterns of horizontal cooperation between universities / colleges is cooperating with business organisations. There are two important conditions for progress in the relationship between business and education. The first is the need to work together, which is particularly important for small countries like Bulgaria, Finland and Belgium - more universities, more companies, more opportunities. A research made by the University of Cambridge about how British businesses work with universities concludes that in most cases some specific problems arise after the initial interaction and not beforehand. Preliminary thorough discussion is highly essential for the future cooperation. The study also shows that no project was completed and prepared by an only partner. The latter is fictional. Many people think of education as a conservative system in which daring

ideas (such as merging a higher school of arts and design with a school of economics and engineering) are not welcome. The flight of imagination should not be limited but encouraged and recommended. Especially if your ultimate goal is success, not the status quo. The above idea is also supported by the article published in The Capital newspaper of November 5th 2010, giving examples of successful collaboration between businesses and universities in Belgium and Finland.

2. Practices of cooperation between businesses and universities in Europe

Practices of cooperation between business and universities in the city of Liege Belgium³

Liege is the center of the Belgian province of Wallonia and a former large industrial center. The steel industry used to be the most developed industry in the past, these days there are only few businesses and lots of memories. After the progressive decline in the 80's and 90's, Liège and Wallonia were running far behind the EU countries and the rest part of Belgium. In 1989 the local businesses decided to deal with the problem. The Commercial and the Industrial chambers, together with the University of Liege set up a small office to keep the communication flow between the companies and the academic society. In the beginning, Interface Enterprises had 3 employees and two-year budget of 250 thousand Euros, generated from each of the firms in these organizations. The aim was to help small and medium companies to innovate their structures and develop more successfully. The big companies usually have their contacts and opportunities but when they leave the market, small and medium businesses experience difficulties. On the other hand, for example, laboratories are not accustomed to working with such companies. The project gained pace and funding. At the beginning Moran and his colleagues visited different companies and tried to persuade them to seek cooperation with the university. In 2005 the government of Wallonia decided to introduce a "Marshall Plan" to revitalize the economy. It set out the guidelines for gathering maximum effort and money - biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, agriculture, transport, engineering and aeronautics. Five clusters were defined, where companies in the particular areas interact with one another and with universities as well.

³ Source: The Capital newspaper, 5th November, 2010

Funding of over 400 million Euros was set for development, investment and research. "Our work is based on these clusters now, where all companies are invited to participate", said Moran. "We already have 50 people and 2.5 million budget from European funds, local government and own projects." The plan provides preferential conditions for establishing and funding of new companies in these clusters and motivation of professors and researchers to participate in them. Cooperation is mutually beneficial - companies gain access to expertise and research universities, scientists working in laboratories have access to excellent equipment, and students benefit from more opportunities to find a work placement. Last week, the cluster of Aeronautics was announced one of five official partner of the European Space Agency.

The Finnish experience in innovative cooperation⁴

In 2010, three universities of Helsinki decided to try something unusual. The University of Art and Design, the University of Technology and The School of Economics and Business Administration formed a merger. The new university, named "Aalto" (after the famous Finnish designer) wants to give space to the ideas of its students – designers, engineers and economists who meet and exchange experiences and thoughts in three general laboratories. They call it the "fertilization of ideas" and businesses liked it very much. As a matter of fact, Apple uses a combination of engineering talent and designer genius, to become one of the most successful companies in the world. "Aalto" must be the academic equivalent. "The idea is not just to have three higher schools in one but to do things together, to benefit from each other," says Mirela Laahemaki from the Corporate Relations Department of the new university. She admits that there was resistance and resentment from some managers of the three universities, but the project was eventually driven by the Ministries of Education and Finance and supported by corporations such as Nokia and Kone. The Rector was elected from an outside organisation - Tuuli Teeri from the Royal Institute of Technology, the leader of Trustees is the executive director of Kone. "We set our program by ourselves, says

⁴ Source: The Capital newspaper , 5th November, 2010

Laahtemaki, but we are not the best in everything - neither round the world nor even in Finland. Therefore, we seek cooperation. There are many good large industrial organizations which give us a hand." The state also helps - at least initially. Currently the university is active in raising funds, because the government promised to multiply funds raised until the summer of 2011 by 2.5. Since the objective was 200 million euros, "Aalto" hopes next year to have half a billion for its activities and research.

3. Practices for building strategic partnerships between two-year schools in the U.S. and representatives of local businesses

Building sustainable links with local businesses is essential to achieve the goals that U.S. universities have set as priorities. Traditional in its mission, for example, universities work for building competitive personnel, possessing knowledge, skills and competencies, relevant to the constantly changing labour market and business environment in order to build a successful individual careers and to contribute for better social development.

Two-year schools and universities communicate with businesses at different levels and in different forms. Firstly, as an example of a good practice we can point out initiatives at a program or department level for involvement of business representatives in the development and updating of academic content of individual programmes and the formulation of learning outcomes for a specific two-year programme.

The form in which it occurs differs a lot and includes the **formation of working groups with representatives of business for regular consultations on a particular training program**. In the working groups, formed within the business programmes in the Community College of Denver, whose members have regular discussions, business representatives have a majority, which means that the position of the business has paramount importance in the process of study programmes preparation.

Another widely applied practice is to consult business representatives in the form of surveys

and studies on their views on various issues related to the study curriculum, as well as their expectations of staff, acquired a two-year university diploma in the labor market .

Variety of lectures and meetings are organized for business representatives and university students in the US schools within the frames of established partnerships.

In addition to the programme and department level contacts of students with business representatives, other forms of events are regularly held - forums such as career days and job fairs with the participation of business representatives and employers, organized by **Career centers** functioning within two-year colleges. Besides organizing internships in various companies and businesses, traditionally, career centers advise students on topics related to their future career.

Along with career centers in most two-year universities there exist established **centers for continuing education**, organizing and conducting training sessions, courses and programmes for professional and personal development for workers, employers and business representatives. Such practices exist at Owens Community College: Workforce and Community Services; Santa Fe Community College: Workforce development office; Cincinnati State Technical and Community College: Workforce Development Center. In addition to providing opportunities for continuing education and lifelong learning for workers and business representatives, short-cycle study programmes not only have access to additional funding but also are well able to establish strong relations with local business and society representatives.

The **Centre for Development of Small Business** could be set as a good example of cooperation with businesses in Santa Fe Community College, established jointly with the independent agency of the federal government to support and protect the interests of small business (US Small Business Administration).

The aim of the Centre for Small Business Development is to support and assist future entrepreneurs or small business owners. The center acts as a generator for entrepreneurship and provides four main types of services: consulting, training, research and technical assistance. Some other two-year higher education institutions such as the Community College of Denver also have developed mechanisms to stimulate entrepreneurship and help

small local businesses within the operational frame of the college centre for career development.

4. Practices for building strategic partnerships between Bulgarian universities and representatives of local businesses

Unlike the well established and working partnerships between universities and businesses in the U.S., building working partnerships with business is still under development in Bulgaria.

A particular example of well-developed practices of partnership between business and universities successfully applied in Bulgaria is building career centres. Career centres were established in most Bulgarian universities and colleges, whose main purpose is to facilitate communication between students and their prospective employers and to assist students in their career planning. A study published on the website of university career centres⁵ indicates that as to August 2010, from a total of 52 accredited universities in Bulgaria, 24 career centres have been built so far. With a total number of 165 612 students at these institutions, all members of the career centres totaled 31,991 students, which makes 19.32%. The largest share of students participating in the centres for career development has the Technical University of Varna - 61.40%, followed by the Philosophy Faculty of Sofia University "Kliment Ohridski". The third position on the list belongs to the International University College in Dobrich, with 51.22 percent of the students involved in the activities of the career center.

The data published on the National Portal website "Rating system for Higher Education in Bulgaria"⁶, suggests that the Career Centre at the International University College is ranked highest of all centres in the country in the professional field of Tourism, receiving a maximum score of 100 points.

⁵ Source: Universities career centres website - <http://careercenters.staj.bg>

⁶ National Portal "Rating System for Higher Education Institutions in Bulgaria" - <http://rsvu.mon.bg/>

The Center for Career Development at the International University College in the town of Dobrich, Bulgaria

The services offered by the Career Center of The International University College are:

- Providing information on labor market opportunities for professional development and continuing education;
- Providing guidance services and counseling in career choice;
- Organizing and conducting training, related to searching and applying for internship and work;
- Mediation in organizing and conducting training courses and job search;
- Organization of seminars, meetings with employers, job fairs;
- Gathering information about current demands for professionals with specific knowledge and skills;
- Providing an opportunity for exchange of information and feedback from young people to help with their further professional training;
- Providing information about companies and vacancies;
- Internet pages;
- Organizing discussions and meetings related to career development;
- Software for career choice;
- Career Education.

The Career Center facilitates the process of supply and demand for internships and jobs. It offers opportunities for career development and training of students, advising on search strategies and job placements and assists employers in seeking interns and new employees. The Career Center assists students throughout their search experience (preparation of documents, a list of potential employers, preparing for interviews, video training, simulations). Through the Career Center, the International University College maintains constant communication with business and the changing demands of the labor market. The Career Center at the University College provides practical knowledge of students regarding their career development, strategies for job search, preparation of applications for internship and job interviews, and more. For this purpose the Center organizes various workshops. The Career Center organizes training programs, maintains communication

between universities and businesses in organizing and conducting training programs. Special days of internships and careers are often organized. Employers get the opportunity to meet students and teachers during the days of internships and career, but also to gather documents of potential candidates for a job / internship.

The Career Center at the International University College organizes year-round **presentations** of established travel companies, among them – The RIU hotels in Obzor beach resort - The Iberostar, and The Sol Melia hotel. Meetings are regularly organized for students to get acquainted with the conditions and performance standards presented by employers. Thus they learn about the best models and practices in the industry. As a result, they have a choice to work among the best, and employers can be sure that they will have interested and motivated prospective employees. In most cases, these meetings are initiated by the Career Center or upon request of employers themselves, who believe in the quality of education offered by the International University College and seek assistance from the Center.

An important activity of the Career Center involves the provision of information – **keeping students informed** about all latest job opportunities and training. The Center maintains a special display where current job offers are announced. All students electronically registered in the career center receive updated information. The website of the IUC - www.vumk.eu, section Career Center also announces all adverts and job placements. Periodically, students complete questionnaires on the activities run by the career center to find out how helpful it is for satisfaction in work.

The number of the internships has roughly doubled for the last academic year. Some of the latest internships offered by the Career Center are programmes in Ireland, Cyprus, Germany, London, Spain, and Holland. The internships offered are mostly in the fields of tourism and hospitality, marketing and logistics.

Another important activity of the Career Center is the **education of students** and assistance in filling the necessary documentation to start work. Students have the opportunity to make an enquiry, to obtain information on the necessary forms or to fill out the application forms electronically.

Specialized **Job Exchange fair** for the field of tourism and tourist services welcomes students who are interested in working in the summer months, and all job seekers of seasonal and permanent

employment. Normally the exchange fair is held at the end of March, before the high season in tourism. During the exchange, students have the opportunity to directly negotiate work conditions with potential employers. As a result of the exchange **58** students were recruited last year.

The Career Center at the IUC conducts an **annual campaign to recruit new members**. AIESEC, the largest international student organization that provides young people with the opportunity to discover and develop their potential and thus have a positive impact on society, cooperates with the Career Center at IUC for over one year. As a result of the proposed options by AIESEC, students in their first and second academic year can work on projects where they can develop their communication and presentation skills, they can learn both to work in a team and to lead one. Attending conferences at home and abroad to gain experience that will benefit their future career development is another challenge for the members. They can also do an internship with a social purpose in another country. The young people in their first year of the study course and the ones doing their master's course in MBA have the opportunity to gain a professional experience in an international company choosing among 106 countries.

Presentations organized by AIESEC members are among the initiatives of the career center at the International University College, providing information and opportunities for personal and professional development of Bulgarian students.

The natural cycle of AIESEC membership usually ends with a professional service that builds up students' professional knowledge and helps to build leadership skills, helps to learn about other cultures and exchange experiences with new people. Students from Bulgaria can get professional experience in any of the other approximately 106 countries where there are offices of AIESEC.

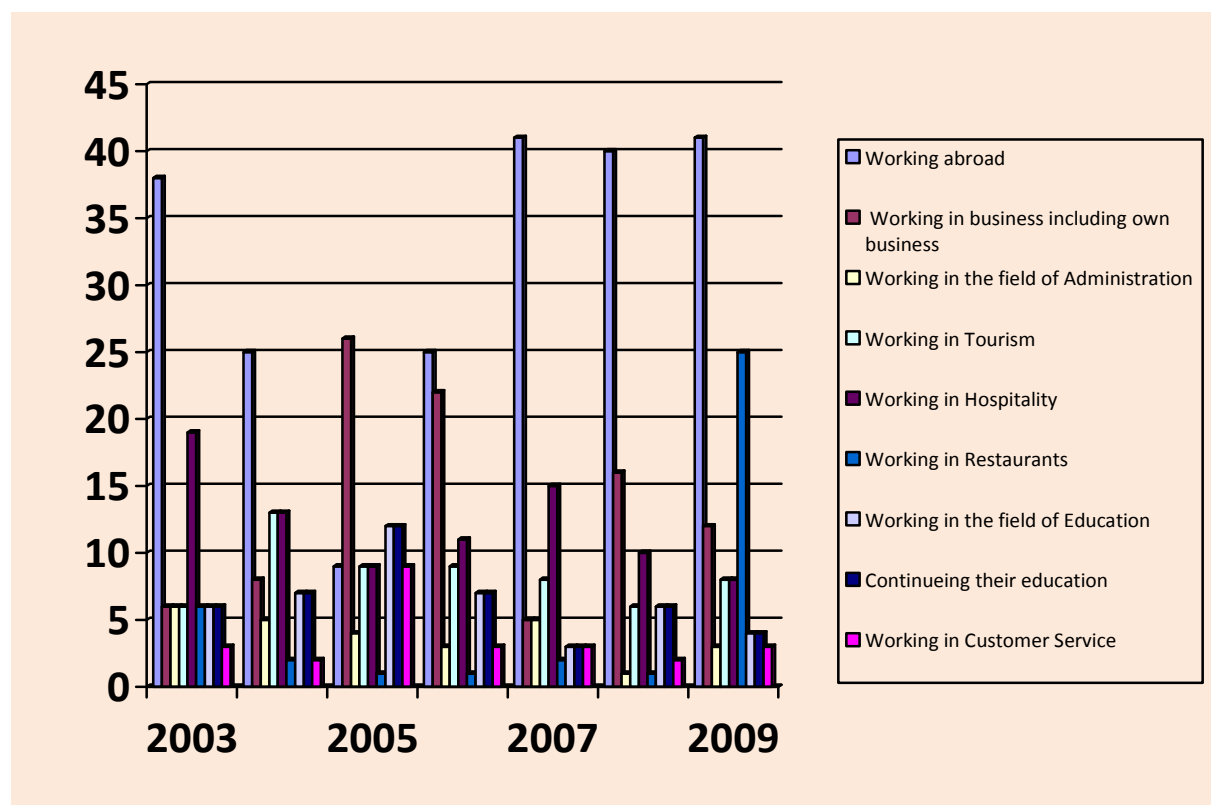
The results of surveys conducted during the years of existence of the center illustrate clearly the effectiveness of the center as a tool for building and maintaining partnerships at different levels - with universities and colleges from other countries, contacts between business and science, assistance in establishing contacts between students and businesses. The results are described in the attached table:

Table 1: Comparative analysis of the activities of the Career Center at IUC:

Year of Graduation	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Working abroad	38 %	25%	9%	25%	41%	40%	41%
Working in the field of business, including starting their own business	6%	8%	26	22%	5%	16%	12%
Working in the field of administration and services	6%	5%	4%	5%	5%	1%	3%
Working in the field of tourism	6%	13%	9%	9%	8%	6%	8%
Working in hospitality	19%	13%	9%	11%	15%	10%	8%
Working in restaurants	10%	25%	17%	19%	18%	18	19%
Working in the field of education	6%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1	5%
Continuing their education	6%	7%	12%	7%	3%	6	4%
Working in the field of customer service	3%	2%	9%	3%	3%	2	3%

Surveys show that students with the highest professional performance tend to be of those who are doing a study course in Hotel Management - professional field 3.7 Administration and Management. Subsequent studies showed that 100% of graduates in the IUC work or continue their education in a higher education form. The results of studies on the degree of realization of students graduating from the International University College are visually shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Realization of students in the labor market as a result of partnerships between students organizations and businesses. Figure 1 provides comparative information based on the following criteria:



5. Partnership between universities and business organizations at national and regional level

Another type of horizontal partnership is represented by partnerships between universities and companies at national and regional level. An interesting example of such cooperation, between universities competing with each other for students, is the **establishment of entrepreneurial centres**.

In the European Parliament Resolution of 20 May 2010 on new partnership for the modernization of universities - a dialogue between universities and businesses (2009/2099 (INI)), paragraph 46 states: "... commercial entrepreneurship in its various forms should be seen as a career choice for young graduates and higher education institutions have to

provide their students with thorough knowledge of all forms of entrepreneurship, including social and solidarity economy, encouraging them to establish their own companies. "

Over the past five years, Bulgarian universities begin to actively work towards improving the entrepreneurial skills of students. That is why universities have initiated the process of building closer links with business and business support through innovative business ideas of students. Bulgarian State gives priority to the development of entrepreneurship through the implementation of various national and international programs, including funding from EU funds. The Ministry of Economy, Energy and Tourism of Bulgaria announced annual competition for the creation of entrepreneurship centers in 4 universities in the country.

Practices of establishing an inter-university centre for promotion of entrepreneurship in the North East region of planning in the republic of Bulgaria

The practice consists of encouraging students from North-East planning region to start their own business while studying, thanks to the set up in November 2009 **Inter-University Centre for the promotion of entrepreneurship**, initiated by the International University College. The Centre for Entrepreneurship provides students with the opportunity to present their business plan in the manufacturing or services to corporate managers. The center organizes a forum of interested managers, who can offer resources and investment to implement business ideas of students. The center also helps in finding financial partners, assistance with students internships, work in a real production environment and others. The new structure relies on a partnership between the IUC, the Technical University - Varna, the Dobrudja College of Technology, the Dobrudja Agricultural Institute, Shumen University, University of Rousse and educational structures in the town of Shumen, Silistra, Targovishte, where local centres are built. Inter-University Centre brings together a team of academics from five universities and enables its widely built network of local centers to assist both students and start-up entrepreneurs from north-eastern Bulgaria.

6. Partnership between universities and businesses through enabling internships for students

In the messages of the Lisbon Treaty to support entrepreneurship in high schools the idea of creating experimental teaching laboratories is launched for businesses which have just started. The creation of training firms to acquire practical skills is well supported in the Bulgarian educational policy about the development of secondary education. A main feature of the training of Bulgarian higher schools and universities is still the deep isolation of learning from practice.

The results of a survey of University College with a focus group of representatives of local authorities and businesses on their assessment of opportunities for introducing short-term higher education in Bulgaria and the role of partnerships between universities and businesses in this area are very indicative in this relation⁷. The survey results showed the following: 51% of surveyed firms gave strong reluctance to engage in regular relations with universities, which were mainly companies in the production and marketing. 68% of companies surveyed in the field of consultancy and business services stated their desire for cooperation, but no financial commitments, such as scholarships or training on behalf of the client. The main conclusions of the discussion showed that Bulgarian business does not make any difference to degrees, whether a young specialist is a Professional Bachelor, Bachelor or Master, and important for the business representatives are the skills and competencies that young people have acquired in the course of their studies. The recommendations that participants made were the following:

- To organize more frequent and regular meetings between business and universities;
- To introduce the practice of trainee's and practical training in real conditions of the students;
- To conduct regular surveys and feedback from business representatives on the need for trained personnel for various economic sectors;

⁷ Survey of 30th March, 2009 in the town of Dobrich among representatives of 16 business organizations in the field of manufacturing, trade, consulting and other business services

The interviewed business representatives have expressed a firm support for the introduction of short-term higher education within the undergraduate degree. The study once again demonstrated that the partnerships between universities and business in Bulgaria are still formalized for the most part and henceforward to give their positive impact on the development of higher education.

However, there are partnerships that have real impact on the quality of the education of universities. IUC has evolved an innovative type of partnership with business in this aspect except through the work of his career center and through a broad network of educational and production companies and structures in which students conduct practice in real conditions.

A good model of partnership in the sphere of tourism is the building of training hotels and restaurants, where together with their practical classes, students participate in the process production as cooks, receptionists, managers of hotels and restaurants.

Practice in building an effective partnership between local authorities, business organizations and higher education for the management of a tourist complex

IUC achieved a successful partnership between local authorities, business organizations and the university for the management of a tourist complex in Dobrich, Bulgaria. The complex consists of Summer Theatre with 2000 seats for spectators, two restaurants and a hotel. With the conclusion of the concession contract with the Municipality of Dobrich, in 2002 IUC assumed the management of the tourist complex. The complex is managed by students, the Summer Theater is marketed by students, and students have their practical training in the restaurants. Besides taking the compulsory practices, the students have the opportunity to work as chefs, waiters and receptionists. Apart from acquiring practical skills in the process of study, the model of management by enabling students of the university to assess the quality of curricula and the need to modernize them, taking into account business needs and the trends of business environment.

The structure of the partnerships between universities and business may be different - both the creation of joint trade companies and establishment of non-profit associations and other forms in which the university participates as an equal partner together with the business.

7. Partnership between universities through the establishment of partnership networks

The results of the on-line survey of **52 higher education institution** in Bulgaria showed that each higher school has stated its participation in networking with other universities and has established bilateral partnerships with other universities.

Horizontal partnerships and collaborations between Bulgarian universities are mainly two types:

- Partnerships established between the Bulgarian and foreign universities to create opportunities for exchange of teachers and students, participating in research through joint projects and partnerships in research or other European projects and partnerships to create better conditions for conducting student placements and internships in the partner university, the development of joint scientific publications and more.

Research shows that every Bulgarian University has signed on average 15-20 partnership contracts of this type, at least 12-13 are contracts for partnerships with European universities and universities of Russia, Ukraine, Japan, Korea, the USA. For comparison, the website of the Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski' indicated the university collaborative partnerships with 63 universities and other organizations worldwide.

Bulgarian universities have already gained experience in establishing and developing partnerships within the European Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci. Almost every Bulgarian University has concluded partnership agreements with more than 20 European universities in order to create conditions for mobility of students and teachers. Partnerships of this type are carried out mainly on the basis of social benefits and innovations, but to some extent they affect the growth, increasing market share or reduce costs of the university. Although these partnerships are beneficial to students and teachers, they are not crucial for improving the quality of higher education and providing optimal conditions for mobility of students and teachers. The so created networks of partners are very democratic. In these networks, universities do not combine resources and know-how, and each university has its own strategic development objectives, which are not close to the objectives of the partner. Not often these partnerships are concluded to joint participation of faculty in academic

conferences or development of research projects. One of the most characteristic patterns of implementation of educational cooperation within universities in different European countries, initiated within the European educational programs for student mobility, research and lifelong learning.

8. Practices of cooperation between European institutions for mobility of students and teachers

The results of the comparative study of EURASHE of 2003 to the short-term cycle of higher education in different European countries, show that the most common source of raise funding for student and teacher mobility, Erasmus and Leonardo da Vinci, complemented by opportunities within the Youth Program and Comenius. There is no data on the number of mobility under the Erasmus made by students participating in the short-term cycle of higher education in Europe, because statistics on the profile of students participating in the Erasmus programme usually indicate the areas of knowledge which they are trained as distinguished teaching at bachelor and master. According to the rules of Erasmus mobility for training or practice can be realized by students enrolled for at least the second year, i.e. unlike the students, in three or four students undergraduate programs in two-year programs that do not plan to continue their education within the undergraduate program have only two semesters in which to plan and implement mobility. The introduction of the European system of credit transfer (ECTS), and the introduction of Diploma Agreement (Diploma Supplement) facilitate the process of mobility and ensure transparency.

Within the "Lifelong Learning" as well as in partnership oriented programs with universities in countries outside the European Union as Atlantis and Tempus, there is a variety of potential opportunities to create solid academic partnerships.

Besides the establishment of foreign partnerships within those programs, universities offering two-year programs cooperate with educational institutions within the country. As good practice can be referred ADIUT network in France which brings together the directors of Instituts Universitaires de Technologie, institutions forming part of various French universities, which offer two-year programs leading to acquisition of the so called Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie. Such networks have been created in other European countries such as Portugal, Denmark and Slovenia. Merging universities offering two-year programs

within higher education in various associations and networks not only create sustainable partnerships between them, but also helps them to protect their interests in society.

Good practice in implementing the strategy for international cooperation of Bulgarian universities is the use of the capabilities of Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Tempus, etc. except for mobility of students and teachers, as well as establishing joint programs, ending with double diplomas.

Against the background of the exceptional diversity of academic partnerships with foreign universities, the partnerships between Bulgarian universities in the horizontal level are still not well-developed. Bulgarian universities still "fight" against each other to attract more students, rather than attempting to establish cooperation through the creation of better educational programs and modernize the learning process.

Another type of partnerships between universities of the same educational market, designed to optimize the real costs of universities, to use joint academic and scientific potential of universities in Bulgaria is still not established. Currently, the Bulgarian government develop a **Strategy for unification of the Bulgarian universities**, through which to implement alliances under the form of federations in which universities keep their identity and autonomy, but join resources, share efficiently and better faculty, conduct joint research, etc. With the change in legislation on higher education important aspects of modern innovative strategic partnerships will be sort out between universities in Bulgaria.

**Practice to build an inter-university partnership at regional level between University
Prof. Zlatarov Bourgas - and IUC**

In the process of still under-developed inter-university partnership in Bulgarian universities, IUC managed to initiate and develop a successful long-term cooperation partnership on the horizontal level with "Prof. Dr. Zlatarov" University in Bourgas⁸. Despite the obvious difference in the appearance of two universities –the first one -a private college of higher education system, training students to a 'Professional Bachelor " qualification degree with

⁸ Source: "Professor Dr. Assen Zlatarov" University – Bourgas, Bulgaria, <http://www.btu.bg/>

1400 students, the other one - State University training students to a master's degree with over 13,000 students, both higher schools introduced the first model for joint training for Bulgaria.

As a result of the efforts of both universities **International University Educational Center was created**, through which English-language business training started in Bourgas. The training programs are accredited by the University of Wales Institute Cardiff - UK, which is a strategic partner of the IUC. The University "Prof. Dr. Zlatarov in Bourgas has excellent staff potential and facilities to implement the English-language training to students and thus was chosen as a partner by the IUC. The program started in 2010, and actual results and analysis of its implementation could be carried out after one year. This initiative launched the unification of resources to offer new quality educational products for Bulgaria.

9. Association of private universities in Bulgaria

Another contemporary example of building collaboration resulting from the impact of external factors is the association of private universities in Bulgaria.

In 2003 in Varna was established association of private universities, whose main objectives are: 1. Forming and expressing the common will and stands on issues of private higher education in Bulgaria, 2. Assisting the authorities to build and implement of national and regional policies in higher education in Bulgaria, 3. Cooperation and assistance for the incorporating of private universities in the European educational space, etc.. Among the founders of the first in the country' Association of private higher education institutions in Bulgaria' are: Varna Open University 'Chernorizets Hrabar', New Bulgarian University, Bourgas Open University, American University in Bulgaria - Blagoevgrad, Private Higher School of International College - Albena, Private Higher School of Insurance and Finance - Sofia, International Business School - Botevgrad and others. On February 11, 2010 'Association of Private Higher Schools in Bulgaria' initiated the signing of the **Charter of socially responsible partnership and modernization of higher education**. The Charter is supported by the National Association of Municipalities in Bulgaria, the Association of Industrial capital, Union for Private Economic Enterprise and others. It was developed in response of the proposed by the Ministry of Education and Science educational reforms. Unification of private universities of varying size, together with business and trade union structures is in response to the reform of higher education and

disagreement of the private universities with the proposed draft for a new Law on Higher Education. This practice is one of the cases of horizontal integration of universities to protect their common interests and implement their strategies for development.

PART TWO

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR JOINT TRAINING, TRANSFERRING THE EDUCATIONAL CREDITS, UPGRADING THE EDUCATIONAL SCALE TO EDUCATION NETWORK - VERTICAL PARTNERSHIPS

1. Vertical partnerships in higher education

The building of the vertical cooperation is subject to the same rules and formulations, as in horizontal type partnerships. In this partnership, partners collaborate and upgrade. A good example of vertical partnership in higher education is precisely the partnership between colleges, offering two and three years of training and the partnerships enable to upgrade this training in the partner universities. A system of credit transfer is one of the mechanisms that make possible and presupposes the creation of such collaborations.

In this Handbook we will present good practices of established partnerships in the transfer of educational credits, as well as various existing models of cooperation between state, local governments and colleges / universities / in different countries.

In 2009 the European Commission ordered to European association of universities (EURASHE), as an advisory member of the Bologna process for a new study that aims to examine progress in the short-term higher education among European countries and to build on the study of educational experts Magda Kirsch and Yves Bernard (Educonsult) in 2003. The final results of the latest survey will be published in the end of 2010. Despite the difficulties in completing online surveys, experts have included results from 65 to present higher education institutions and 23 European ministries of education. The study of EURASHE revealed that three major objectives of short-term cycle of higher education was further professional specialization, focusing on finding a job, short professional training not related to previous education and preparation for the baccalaureate. The majority of universities offers both regular and distance learning, which in most cases lasted two years. Chamber of Commerce, trade unions and employment agencies are the most common social

partners of educational institutions offering short- term cycle higher education. The trade unions and professional organizations have the most important role in developing the curriculum and professional profiles.

The participation of the various companies in the design and implementation of short- term cycle of higher education is different. Behind this collaboration is the idea of an educational approach that focuses on the employer and the skills that will be necessary to adapt the working environment. There are examples of close cooperation between employers and short- term cycle of higher education in Austria, Denmark, France, Britain and others. But there are also examples of less-cooperation in Norway, Romania, Switzerland and Turkey. Lack of any cooperation between professional organizations and institutions offering degree ISCED 5B, is common in **Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary**. Among the professional organizations which have the most significant contribution to the development of curriculum for degree ISCED 5B, are the Chamber of Commerce (Austria, Denmark, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia and others.): Unions (in Italy, Sweden, Turkey, UK), other employers and professional organizations (Northern Ireland), or a local consortium of colleges (Scotland). In 11 out of 17 controls carried out by EURASHE / Educonsult, it is obvious how the curriculum for degree ISCED 5B focuses on practical exercises, and in 6 cases, is a combination of theory and practice. In all 17 controls, it appears that such training agrees with students as a timetable, in 9 of these cases open and distance trainings are offered via Internet and online learning. The preferred specialties for short- term cycle of higher education institutions according to European administrations are business studies, administration, hotel management and catering and information computer technology (IT).

The transition to a bachelor's degree is in the following ways. 11 of 16 respondents have noted that foreign students who have completed the short form of higher education (corresponding to level 5) is possible under certain conditions, switch to bachelor degree (Level 6 of the EQF). A quarter of asked higher education institutions in Europe have introduced special programs with an additional "bridge" year, offering a transition from 60 credits to a bachelor's degree. When asked whether work experience is accepted for credit in the transition from short- term cycle of higher education to a degree as much as 6 cases this experience has been taken into account, while in the other five - not. In 10 surveyed European universities there are no prior training courses for the bachelor. Half of the respondents claim that the majority of students do not go to training level. But most

universities recognize that there is presence of legal rules for moving from the short form of higher education to the undergraduate program in their countries.

The conclusion of Kirsch and Bernard is that short-term education is the missing bond between Level 4 and Level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework. Institutions that offer short-term higher education have created as an organizational priority internationalization through the issue of credits, diploma supplement (Diploma Supplement), participation of faculty and students in mobility programs and collaboration with foreign universities.

2. The experience of universities in the U.S. in building academic partnerships to transfer educational credits

In the U.S. short-term forms of higher education are offered mainly by public colleges (community colleges). The degrees that are acquired after passing the short-term cycle of higher education are Associate's degrees: Associate in Arts (AA), Associate in Science (AS) or Associate in Applied Science (AAS). In the U.S. there are less short-term programs, graduate certificates.

Over the past 10 years the number of bachelor's recipients of pre-qualification (sub-baccalaureate) in the U.S. has increased by 30%. The issue of Associate degrees has increased by 28% and certificates of qualifications - 33%. As a percentage distribution of ten-year period more than half of the levels obtained after passing the short-term programs are largely correlated to the demand for labor by companies.

One of the main functions of the public colleges in the U.S. is providing transition to a bachelor's degree. Providing the first two years of training to prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges is the reason for the appearance of a two-year American college in the early 20th century⁹. There are various patterns of transition, as the traditional model of transition from two-year to four-year educational institution, is expressed in two basic varieties.

The first model is the transfer of students from grade Associate in Arts (AA) or Associate

⁹ Sorce: Slancheva, 2007

in Science (AS), even before they receive this two-year degree. Statistics shows¹⁰ that 24% students at two-year institutions that have enrolled with the intention to transfer to baccalaureate, half (12%) actually have succeeded. Studies show that the completion of Associate's degree increases the possibility of successful graduation in bachelor degree in the future.

The second type is the transfer of students from non-transferrable degree as the Associate in Applied Science (AAS) or courses for nurses, business management and office management to the 4-year college. Different approaches are studied among the four-year colleges for acceptance of students who have completed courses in non-transferrable degrees. For example, 72.6 percent of non-transferrable passed courses with credits of 26 California community colleges have successfully passed to the California State University, and 26.75% - University of California.

The third type is an unusual pattern of transfer of four educational institution in the community college, known as "reverse student transfer " or "drop downs"¹¹ . The percentage of students who passed the reverse transfer is different for different institutions, but on average it is equal to 13%. There is also a fact that a significant percentage of college students can enroll in more than one college - a model known as "multiple transfer" or "phenomenon of rotation" ("swirling"). While "swirling", some students in the two-year educational institution fall into another two-year college before they enroll in four or attend more than one-year and more than a four-year college. American Association of Public Colleges finds that 50% of the students obtained bachelor's degree at national level was trained in two-year colleges.

Another model of transition between two-and four-year colleges is the so called. **"Double reverse student transfer"**, existed when students start their studies at community college, transfer to a four-year college and then again transferred to a community college. Last but not least, there are students who are enrolled in two institutions at one and the same time, where they acquire higher education. As part of the system to acquire higher education are taken into account the number of passing summer courses. Different models of transition between institutions of higher education, offering different levels, help students to obtain degrees in a shorter time and save on fees for enrollment.

¹⁰ Berkner, Lorn and Clune. 2000. Beginning Postsecondary Student Longitudinal Study

¹¹ Source: Slancheva, 2009

In 2001, Bradburn & Hurst conducted a national survey of different student populations, to track the transfer of students to public or private institutions offering four-year course of study to acquire a degree of Bachelor. One of the conclusions of sociologists was that students enrolled in more classes, with transferrable credits for undergraduate, are more informed about their future educational paths and most often pass on to the further training for higher degrees. More critical scholars believe that the transfers from the short form of higher education in undergraduate programs do not prepare properly students for the academic load and this can be seen in the lower achievement of these students during their studies for a bachelor. However, studies show that the performance of students, who received Associate degree, is rarely problematic in their transition to a higher degree. Respectively, the success among those students who have transferred to a four-year college before they have received Associate degree is lower during their studies in the bachelor program. In some cases, there is decline in the success of the transferred student during the first semester of the four-year program.

The transition from two-year colleges in four is a challenge to both the academic world and the state. One of the policies to improve the dialogue in this direction includes:

- Individual agreements between community colleges and 4-year educational institutions relating to each course individually.
- Development of state agreements for the transfer of Associate degrees in undergraduate programs. In Ohio, the percentage of transfers between colleges is quite high, but in states like California, New York, North Carolina, Florida, Washington, 4-year colleges cannot fit all students wishing to transfer. In 2005, New York colleges have rejected 38% of applicants to be transferred.
- Development of mechanisms for transfer to bachelor of applied sciences. It's about community colleges in the states Florida, Texas and Utah, which have adapted a mechanism for issuing its own degree, known as Bachelor of Applied Science from the community college.

- Implementing programs issuing diplomas with honors to those students wishing to transfer to certain colleges or universities.
- Develop substantial systems for consultation.¹²

It is well known that the possibility of a two-year degree obtained in higher education (Associate degree) to be recognized as part of a four-year bachelor's degree is among the leading motives in the selection of students to study at two-year colleges (community colleges). The transfer students from four- to two-year colleges can be achieved in various stages of training in two-year colleges (after 1, 2 or 3 semesters) and after the acquisition of two-year degree. This transfer can be realized as a result of pre-established practices and rules for the transfer and recognition of credits and periods of study established at the level of education or thanks to personal motivation and student's commitment. A number of procedures that are applied in case the student himself have initiated the transfer from two-year to four-year colleges, between which there are no established mechanisms for cooperation in this field. In this case the planning process of transferring is a sole responsibility of the student. Successful planning requires extensive preliminary consultation with the host institution as well as early notification of the institution where the student learns at the time or has received the so called two-year degree at higher education level. It is important to emphasize that the recognition of credits or acquired a two-year degree from institutions in four programs is possible only when the student has been trained in an accredited institution. The most frequent procedures in self-initiated transfer require the institution where the student learns or has successfully completed a two-year cycle within the higher education send an official details of all courses and credits that were accumulated during the training, including information on learning results, methods of assessment and teaching methodology. This information is most often transmitted through official channels to the Department of Academic Affairs of the host institution, where a team consisting of: the head of the department of a program, and teachers in specific disciplines discuss academic content and those learning results and decide on the number of credits which can be recognized.

An exception to this practice is automatic recognition of credits gained during the

¹² Snejana Slancheva-Durst, Asst. Prof., University of Toledo. 2009. Short-Cycle Higher Education in the United States.

training in general education subjects, which may be regulated at the level of state. In New Mexico the Commission on Higher Education (New Mexico Higher Education Department) has approved a list of general education courses that all U.S. universities recognize automatically in case of transfer. An interesting practice is the introduction of certain institutions of appeal procedure against the results of the commission's decision involved the recognition of credits at the institutional level. In Santa Fe Community College a student may apply for reconsideration of the decision of the commission, preparation and submission of portfolio with detailed information about this course. If he is denied of credit recognition again, he may ask the Vice President of the institution in charge of teaching and academic activities that make a final decision. If the student is not recognized credits in general subjects appearing on the list approved by the Commission on Higher Education, he may appeal to the institution before the Commission itself. If the commission decides in favor of the student, the institution is obliged to recognize those credits, and to reimburse the student all the costs associated with this course. Created a state-level agreement on recognition of credits must not only establish common standards, but the format for cooperation between institutions in the state.

Such a law regulating the process of recognition of credits in higher education at a state level exists in Ohio too, where in 1990 Ohio Board Regents developed a document introducing a policy of transfer and recognition (Ohio Articulation and Transfer Policy) of credits to serve as legal basis for transfer of students from a state university to another. All state universities in the state are invited to sign this agreement as opposed to independent private higher education institutions, whose participation is optional. The purpose of this agreement is to minimize recurrence of the same general education courses in the learning process of a student.

The agreement approves list of courses and modules (Transfer Module), whose recognition is automatically transferred from one state university to another. This list contains general subjects such as English, mathematics, statistics, logic, art and humanities, social sciences, communication. It should be noted that although the recognition of credits in those courses is automatic, host institution has the right to impose additional requirements if the curriculum of a program are included general education courses other than those for which the student has earned credits. Under the agreement for transfer of credits between state universities in Ohio student takes full responsibility for the planning of their curricula, considering what courses to

attend, if he plans transfer to another school. It is recommended that each student in the two-year program to plan its development in higher education long-term. In this process he may be advised and supported in his choice of faculty and staff of the institution from the beginning of his studies. In most U.S. two-year colleges working mechanisms and structures for advising students are well established. This role may be performed by the coordinator of a program by the heads of departments, officials in the academic department or other unit in the administration or particular persons appointed for that purpose. Information on opportunities for transfer can be obtained on-line of the specialized **u.select** site, where everyone can register for free and receive information about the courses and their counterparts, the requirements of individual programs, learning results, etc.

The creation of a separate unit within the administration of an institution which deals with advising students on their ability to transfer is common practice not only in the two-year colleges but also in institutions that train students at Bachelor. For example, in Metropolitan State College of Denver there **is a separate office called the Transfer Services Office, which serves only students** who want to continue their education after they have been trained at another university. The establishment of such office in that institution is justified by the fact that more than 50% percent of new students each year are those who come from another university. The office facilitates the process of student transfer as help and assistance in applying and filling out the documents, advise students of other institutions in their choice of credit there to their optimal recognition at a later stage in the transfer, conducts meetings with both applicant students and representatives of the institutions where they trained before the transfer, which connects future students and faculty in programs which they are interested in. Unlike the above agreement on recognition of the transfer and recognition of credits at the level of state in Ohio, which is binding for all U.S. universities from the state (for two-year higher schools, and four-year higher schools and universities) in Colorado as good practice in **building sustainable partnerships can be shown the unification of all U.S. two-year colleges in the association, called the Colorado Community College System**. Its membership includes 13 schools, which educate a total of 117 000 students and thus this association represents the largest association of universities and a framework for cooperation in the state. The rules and options for transfer students who have completed these institutions in state universities in Colorado are fixed in a document called the Colorado Community College Common Core Curriculum.

The above mentioned various state level agreements aimed at regulating the process of transferring students from one university to another are obligatory for public funded

institutions. Private colleges offering programs leading to the acquisition of BA, also enroll students after the transfer, providing opportunities for recognition of credits already gained. In these cases, mechanisms for transfer students are recognized at the institutional level as a result of preliminary bilateral negotiations with other two-year colleges. Some of these agreements cover all two-year programs in higher education, leading to acquisition of the so called Associate of Science degrees and Associate of Arts, others are focused only on specific programs, published on the website of the Owens Community College: https://www.owens.edu/enroll_current/articulation.html.

Bilateral agreements between individual institutions may be framework, setting general conditions for cooperation in the transfer of students, and very precisely formulated, describing in detail the conditions for transfer a student in a program from one institution to another, as the name of the courses, number credits that will be recognized, learning results, etc. Some institutions such as Santa Fe Community College have established practice to conclude bilateral agreements to transfer students priority to institutions of that state, i.e. transfer opportunities that are provided, are within the state. Other two-year institutions have bilateral agreements with institutions outside the local municipality or state. Traditionally, the opportunity to transfer, have those students who have completed a two-year degree or Associate in Science or Associate in Arts. It is important to note that more and more four-year universities established practice to recognize credits earned in programs leading to a degree Associate in Applied Sciences .For instance, the program in Business Administration Community College Denver, leading to a degree Associate in Applied Sciences ensures transfer and recognition of all credits received under the general subjects and three quarters of the credits acquired by specialized courses.

Practice for student mobility

As good practice can be shown the fact that all two-year universities publish on their site information about the opportunities for students' transfer after the acquisition of two-year degree. Providing such information is important not only in terms of transparency, which is an important element of the culture of quality within an institution, but also because the presence of a variety of opportunities for educational progress and personal development of students making programs attractive and institutions a desirable place for the future students. Last but not least are the opportunities for further training in undergraduate programs after the acquisition of two-year degree in higher education, provides continuity of the educational

process and in this sense is an essential part of the policy of lifelong learning.

The **mobility of students** and teachers within the higher education encourages language learning and developing cultural sensitivity among the transferring people from one institution to another school, thus stimulating competition between institutions in European Higher Education Area. Mobility provides the opportunity for recognition of teachers and researchers in international academic environment.

3. Model of partnerships at Toledo University, Ohio, USA

Maintaining a close link between local industry and students is a key component of effective workforce development in the U.S. The success of the educational model at the University of Toledo, Ohio, is due to the fact that the strategy for higher education of Toledo is seen as an instrument of economic development of the state (McLean: 2010). The model of training in Toledo aims the maximum number of students, access and quality of training, thanks to the adaptable learning paths. Satisfaction of local business and increased number of internships (work placements) and the exchange of cooperative principles (coops) are necessarily a measure of the effectiveness of the University System of Ohio. On the other hand the involvement of public figures and politicians on the board of directors of universities and colleges as well as strong trade unions in some colleges play an important role in achieving quality and access of education in Ohio as well as better collaboration between business and academic world. Cooperation between all stakeholders is an imperative for the regional development, including the creation of valuable programs for career expansion.

Practice of partnership between all interested parties in Toledo

The educational model of Toledo includes extensive cooperation with social partners, local authorities and other academic institutions with the only purpose of economic progress in the region / state. The emphasis on new economic realities, relying on historical experience and expertise of Toledo (such as traditional glass production and manufacturing of auto parts) are also a prerequisite for the success of the educational model of Toledo.

The role of **local business** is to identify this demand for labor, the most active sectors of the demand for workers, and have a vision for the future needs of the regional economy. Another important role of companies is to offer internships and other cooperative agreements

between academic institutions and the real economy (e.g. General Electric, P & G, photovoltaic and "green" companies, etc.).

The role of **universities** in the region is clear: to attract students - the "right" students (McLean: 2010), in contrast, to offer reasonably designed training programs which graduate by certificates, or degrees. Among the relevant programs are those in the Owens College as training in the installation of solar panels and technical expertise on wind turbines. It is vital for the developed curricula to match the business needs while at the fabric of the programs combine "market and philosophical challenge" (McLean: 2010.).

The role of the **state** is mainly subsidy granted to public colleges, as a significant addition to the funding is for research and improve the condition of the equipment, infrastructure, transport and logistics in a college. The state sometimes gives business support directly to the colleges in the form of loans and grant, however, its role is more limited than the role of regional power.

The state of Ohio has created a unified and integrated system of (re) training of employees responsible directly to the needs of employers and is named Ohio Skills Bank (literally - Skills Bank of Ohio)¹³. The process of "banking" is led by Academic Board in partnership with the Ministry of Development, Ministry of Labor and family relationships of Ohio, as well as with partners from the most developed industries in the region. The collaboration with employers is a key to the system of higher education in Ohio driver of economic development at national level.

The importance of **regional authorities** to develop local colleges in the state is measured by the achieved degree of interaction between academic institutions in the region and the key industrial companies. If local managers have understood the needs of the business community, they participate fully in the promotion of those career paths that serve major business interests at the regional level.

Last but not least is the role of **regulating the university system in Ohio**¹⁴, to encourage higher education to meet the economic needs of both local and federal level. An important task of surveillance authorities in education is to encourage the transfer of credits from one

¹³ <http://www.uso.edu/aboutUs/index.php>

¹⁴ University System of Ohio consists of 14 state universities, 24 campuses of universities outside the state, 23 community colleges and more than 120 centers for adult professional education
adults.<http://www.uso.edu/opportunities/ohioskillsbank/index.php>

program to another, and to recognize the training, without getting a degree. The last measure allows employers to obtain a clear picture of areas of expertise of the learner, his skills and competences, having undergone training without a degree.

American Association of Public Colleges actively promotes international exchange among students in two-year institutions, wherever in the world and to what degree. Thus the model of the U.S. community college was evaluated and replicated in other parts of the world such as among European countries through the Bologna process.

Why are public colleges considered so highly efficient? One reason is that 65% of them teach from books written by business professionals and experts from the real economy (recruitment literature). 75% of two-year colleges offer their students opportunity to study abroad, which does not delay their graduation.

In fact, about 66% of public colleges in the U.S. managed a training exchange with foreign institutions in which students receive transferable credits needed to obtain a further degree. And last but not least, 92% of colleges have a department for international educational exchange, which has a language laboratory and assistance in all aspects. Training programs abroad are offered by almost one third of these colleges in the U.S. but only 10% of them have established partnerships for internships and job opportunities for mutual services and partnerships (service opportunities). However, even in the most active colleges only 2% of students enroll for a foreign program.

There exists an indisputable need to promote short-term programs abroad and internationalization of campuses and school curriculum, says Gretchen Carroll, professor of management and leadership in the Owens Community College (2010). Regional associations, accredited two-year college education, have adopted standards and policies with which to mentor colleges on how to carry out fruitful international partnerships¹⁵. In turn many of the two-year colleges changed their statutes, and have added options for training foreign students in an effort to globalize their knowledge. For example, the American Assembly of college business schools (American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business) has adopted guidelines for accreditation of business schools, which encourages them to systematically update their curricula in line with international requirements. Especially

¹⁵ Programs of public colleges are accredited by regional and professional associations. Institutional accreditation is given by one of six regional accreditation organizations covering the region of a college. The largest is the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, which accredits schools and universities in Ohio

for two-year institutions, the College includes in its standards expansion of the global perspective of students through the study of international business environment in the curricula of business colleges. Here is what is said in a policy document of the American Association of public colleges in international education: "To ensure the wellbeing of our community, local colleges must work for educated citizens with developed intercultural and global competence. *To achieve this public colleges must ensure: update of curricula in line with international requirements, intercultural activities to develop cultural sensitivity, language training and research on the culture of different ethnic groups.* In addition, the Association recommends sending students abroad on exchange programmes, professional development opportunities, provision of technical assistance to foreign businesses and industrial enterprises, organizing local, national and international forums, and attracting foreign students. Washington Government supports these initiatives through its international education policy that promotes intercultural understanding, language training and greater understanding of the world of American citizens, while at the same time it is proud that the American education attracts and educates future leaders from all around the world. 20% of the two-year state colleges in the U.S. receive government benefits to support their international programs. These institutions should not be viewed as preparatory place for work force but also as active institutions educating citizens who are able to manage global communities, notes Gretchen Carroll¹⁶. Perspectives are more than half of Americans to start training in a public two-year college, which means about 13 million new students by the end of 2010, including foreigners. Because of distance and open forms of education, and because the migration of international students from one college to another, public colleges should not be viewed as local institutions, only locked in a given geographical area.

The pattern of internationalization of Owens Community College, Ohio

In the Owens College in Toledo and Findley, Ohio are trained 45,000 students a year. 200 of them are foreign trainees from 32 different countries. In additions, the Owens College serves 17,000 people in the government program for workforce development in the U.S. and nearly 350 companies and production companies through contracts for retraining of employees. The

¹⁶Gretchen Carroll, Owens Community College, 2010. The Status of Internalization of Community Colleges

main areas of academic interest are business, art and theater arts, healthcare, hotel management, public administration, commercial sales, technology, transport, engineering sciences and others.

Students at Owens College have the opportunity to undergo two years of training and to bring those 120 credits in a subsequent program in a four-year bachelor college or university. According to Professor Carroll, a two-year course done at Owens skillfully "matches" transferable loans with further training for higher degrees. Owens College has made agreements for transfer of academic credits with more than 20 four-year colleges and universities. This practice is not successful without the support of organizations dealing with the internationalization of education as the Youth for Understanding International Exchange, Sister Cities International and People to People International.

4. Opportunities for student transfers and academic partnerships for joint training or further education in BULGARIA

In Bulgaria there are no educational models linking education above secondary schooling with post-secondary and higher education. The reason is the lack of a credit system in vocational education and training particularly in the two-year vocational colleges after secondary education. In their National survey on the place of short-term training in Bulgaria in higher education - Dobrich, 2009¹⁷, special attention is paid to opportunities for mobility of students and trainees in each of the types of training after high school and continuing in the system of higher education. For a two-year period from 2008 to 2010 no mobility of students was recorded from one higher educational institution to another.

In the Higher Education Act it is legally enshrined the obligation of universities to create

¹⁷ National research on the place of short-term training in Bulgaria in higher education - Dobrich, 2009, prepared by the IUC.

conditions for student mobility, both between different disciplines within a university, and between different universities. The inter-university partnership agreements account for over 25 per contract for each university in Bulgaria providing such opportunities, but in practice they are not used.

By the sociological studies on the place of short-term higher education conducted by both the International University College among 2164 students in 2009, and the Monday Insight / Hewitt Associates to Bulgaria in 2008, which covered 12,477 students – there stands out the preference from students to **three-year courses of study for bachelor's degree** instead of four-year courses because of the rapid transition to the labor market and / or further training to a master's degree. Almost two thirds of those polled would choose to complete their higher education abroad because of the better quality and large choice of courses, easy credit transfer and opportunities for mobility.

According to students, higher education system in Bulgaria does not provide opportunities for mobility between different disciplines and universities in Bulgaria, which is essential for the introduction of the short-cycle higher education.

Although the mobility of students nationwide has not yet developed in Bulgaria, the International University College has established good practice in setting conditions for continuing the training at a higher degree through recognition of past periods of training.

Practices of HRC Culinary Academy Bulgaria Ltd. in building academic partnerships for recognition of training periods completed in other educational institutions

Culinary Academy was established as a two-year educational institution to prepare first-class chefs for the international tourist business. Students of culinary mastery can complete their studies after a two-year cycle, get a second degree for the profession of chef. Students wishing to continue their studies for academic degrees, extend their education for another two years and also receive training as a chef and a **professional diploma degree in hotel management**. The first two years of their study in the Culinary Academy are dedicated to

improving the practical skills and the next two years to build more bachelor theoretical knowledge. Successful partnership is built between the Dutch company HRC and the IUC. The form of this partnership has proven its effectiveness for more than four years now. A new company was recently registered - HRC Culinary Academy Bulgaria, with the participation of the IUC. Students who do not wish to continue their education and obtain a higher education degree "Professional Bachelor", obtain a certificate of second degree professional qualification. This license does not entitle them to continue further into higher education, according to the provisions of the 2010 law on higher education and vocational education and training. Students who do a two-year further course after the completion of their culinary courses receive a higher education diploma upon successful graduation. These students are awarded a Professional Bachelor degree in Hotel Management and Certificate qualification a second degree "chef". The existence of a short-cycle training within the higher education in Bulgaria, would allow transfer of credits and continuing education of students at The Culinary Academy in more universities. Although it is not resolved legally, the transfer of credits between two-year training and 3 and 4 year university courses of study, practice has shown that it is possible to create effective partnerships of this kind even before the legislative regulation is set.

There are many other examples of partnership agreements for the recognition of previous periods of learning and transfer of educational credits.

Practices adopted by a private college of tourism in the town of Shumen to create conditions for transfer of credits and further education leading to a higher degree, based on partnerships between different types and scale of educational institutions

A partnership agreement between the International University College and the Private College of Tourism - Shumen was established even before the accreditation of the Tourism College in Shumen. The collaboration includes the development of curricula of similar subjects by a joint team of experts. Even before formally being accredited as a two-year tourism college in Shumen, the school programmes for the two professional fields, which the college offers were developed, discussed and accepted by the authorities of Shumen College and the Tourism Department and the Economics Department of the International College. Conduct of student internships and practices, and intensive English language were

coordinated. This partnership creates an opportunity to establish a smooth transition of a two-year graduate course for students who are able to continue their education to obtain a university diploma, a professional Bachelor degree of the IUC.

The partnership came to reality as a result of a built continuity in the study programmes, teaching methods and last but not least, established confidence in both institutions.

Implementation of best practices of the IUC imposes again the conclusion that for creating effective and innovative strategic partnerships, the main factor is the presence of **motivation of the partners, mutual trust and shared risk**.

If the purpose of the partnership is clear and the commitment of partners is adequate, other problematic issues may easily find their solution.

5. Innovative strategic partnerships for joint training and award of double diplomas of higher education

We will present the experience of the IUC in the creation of partnerships related to the issue of double degree diplomas for students from European partner universities.

Cooperation between European universities for joint training of students and award of double diplomas of higher education

A positive experience of the IUC is the creation of academic partnerships in order to recognize the results of a study course, conducted in a partner university and certification of higher education of two or three European universities, concluded the agreement for joint training.

• Partnership with University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC)

A strategic partner of the International University College since the 2009/2010 academic year is the University of Wales Institute Cardiff - UK. UWIC accredited the "Hotel Management and International Business and Management study programmes, based on that a joint / double degree diplomas are awarded. The partnership between University College and UWIC allows students to receive a Bulgarian and a second bachelor's degree BA (Hons) from University of Wales after three years (6 semesters) in the IUC. In the history of the IUC as a partner can be added also the franchise programme in Master of Business Administration (MBA). The Hotel Management study course includes two obligatory internships abroad. Students in the Business and Management, International Business Management and Business Information Systems have to do their internships in relevant departments of international companies. The training practice accumulates credits under the European system of credit transfer in higher education (ECTS).

During the academic year 2009-2010, 69 students enrolled the joint programs with UWIC. Currently in the franchising programs are being trained 53 students in MBA, 5 in Hotel Management and 7 in International Business and Management. An increase in the number of MBA students is recorded, including students holding a bachelor degree from other schools.

On June 25, 2010 IUC received accreditation from UWIC for new study programmes at undergraduate level - Business and Management Studies with specialization in Retail Management, Strategy and Enterprise, Finance, Law, Human Resource Management, International Business Management, Information Systems Management, Marketing.

• Partnership with University College Birmingham (UCB)

IUC started also 2 Master's of Tourism programmes in cooperation with UCB - Tourism Business Administration and Tourism Destination Marketing. The first semester of training will be held in University College, the second and third - in the UCB. Currently in Bulgaria there is no Master's degree in English. New courses will expand product portfolio and IUC will consolidate its position as one of the leading universities in Bulgaria with training in English.

- **Partnerships with universities in the United States of America**

In August and September 2010 the IUC representatives visited several universities in the U.S., which initiated the ideas for participation in IUC projects under the ATLANTIS Project. As a result of the meetings, currently a project is being developed for Transatlantic undergraduate program in tourism with the participation of the IUC, UWIC, Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Finland), Texas A & M University (USA) and University of South Carolina (USA). The aim of the project is students to have the opportunity to graduate with three bachelor's degrees after four years of training - 2 at universities in the European Union and 1 year in a university in the U.S.

- **IUC partnership with the University of Portsmouth (University of Portsmouth)**

Britain provides an opportunity to obtain double Bulgarian-British Diploma in BA (Hons) Business Administration (BA with honors in Business Administration), BA (Hons) Marketing (Marketing), BA (Hons) International Finance and Trade (International Trade and Finance), BA (Hons) in Hospitality Management (Hotel Management).

Students who complete three years of special training in hotel management, can continue in the college in Dobrich into their fourth year, doing the study program of Stenden University – based on a Dutch know-how and obtain a bachelor's degree in International Tourism Management. In another Dutch university - HAN University of Applied Sciences, students pursue four-year program in International Business and Management.

- **Harstad University College**

Bilateral agreement between University College and University College of Harstad, Norway allows students of all business majors to get an original diploma degree in Advanced Marketing (Marketing advanced). Academic program includes intensive course (summer school) in the Region, three-month training in the college in Norway together with the option for distance learning.

The listed examples show that the determining factor for creating innovative strategic partnerships in **higher education is the initiative of universities, the mutual sharing of educational values, and developing similar strategies.**

The practical experience of the IUC in the creation and implementation of programs leading to the acquisition of double degree diplomas will be crucial in the development of programs with this purpose in the short-cycle higher education, as long as two-year degree courses are introduced in Bulgaria. Bearing in mind the intensity of internationalization processes which occur in Owens Community College, one of the directions in which cooperation between the two partner organizations might develop after the completion of this project is the creation and implementation of programs in business and hotel management, leading to the acquisition of double degrees. The broad experience that IUC is in the development of such programs shows that unless there is mutual trust and sufficient resources key to the success of such a program is good pre-planning activities, following the appropriate methodology of work and continuous commitment to quality of part of both institutions.

Culture of quality and following the principles of transparency and integrity are leading the process of creating programs leading to the acquisition of double degrees. It should be noted that these programs are not a mechanical sum of the established institutions of the two separate practices, containing a value that can not be achieved with the tools of individual programs. The experience that each institution has in the construction of horizontal and vertical partnerships also contributes to improving the quality of the new program. This experience must be integrated in each of the activities leading to the ultimate goal. During the preparation process, the following areas and topics are discussed in detail:

1. Extent to which will lead the newly created program, and opportunities for transfer to institutions and programs at bachelor level.
2. Duration of training and periods of mobility between the two institutions. Period of four semesters of training is short and the integration of mobility period requires great flexibility of the three parties concerned: student and host institution.

3. Curriculum: working groups representing both institutions involved in the process of the so called "Screening" to identify areas, modules and procedures under which harmonization will be taken to achieve comparability and compatibility of the programs. A fundamental principle in the process of harmonization of programs leading to the acquisition of double degrees is to achieve the same results and outputs of the training (learning outcomes). The creation of programs leading to double degrees implies harmonization of objectives both schools have set in conjunction with the program. Besides clearly defining the outputs of training an important element in the preparatory phase is the specification of criteria for admission into its programs. The assessment criteria during the training and requirements for the award of credits also constitute an essential stage in the preliminary phase.

4. Due to legal obstacles to establishing a joint program in which it is issued a joint diploma upon successful completion of programs leading to the acquisition of double degrees between IUC and Owens Community College, graduates will receive two separate diplomas issued by two institutions.

5. Tuition fees

6. Language policy and intercultural differences

7. Student services and assistance with visas for training in the implementation of mobility between the two institutions.

Following the successful planning of activities related to the introduction of two-year programs in business and hotel management at IUC and Owens Community College, leading to the acquisition of double degrees, both institutions will sign an agreement that will allow and regulate the practical implementation of new programs. Bilateral partnership to create programs for double degrees in the short-cycle is a huge step in the development of the idea of creating double and joint degrees, and in the process of raising the social prestige of short-term higher education is often confronted with prejudices and negative attitudes on the depth of these programs and their quality.

6. Recommendations for building strategic partnerships in the short-cycle higher education

This section will summarize the key recommendations, which play a major role in building effective strategic partnerships between educational institutions and other interested sides, to introduce and develop short-term higher education. The most important factors for building successful partnerships are:

- **Identifying the right partner:**

As a result of studies carried out and implemented practices for partnerships in higher education, two key factors that underlie successful partnership can be derived. Sustainable partnership is impossible to implement without the involvement of stable and reliable partners. That is why we offer several criteria for **selecting partners**.

Partners should have compatible goals, strengths and resources. Their readiness and motivation for their cooperation and financial resources must be balanced. For the partnership to be balanced both universities must have approximately the same objectives, profile, number of students, tuition fees. This will allow balanced and equal partnership. Two organizations have the chance to create a successful partnership, if all criteria are met - both sides have the investment funds and there is operational and financial compliance, there is strategic compliance, and there is cultural conformity.

Strategic compliance determines whether the partners are compatible in the long term. Organisations need to be convinced that they can create synergistic relationship and their long-term goals and aspirations are not contradictory. The more complicated or longer is the partnership the more important is the strategic compliance. When working together, the two organisations can achieve a better competitive advantage than when working separately.

Cultural compliance. It requires both universities' cultures to be compatible. University culture is expressed in the style of government policy on student enrolment, decision making, and guidance of the organisation's policy to the students, their desire and need for training, training programs, the desired objectives to be achieved.

The allocation of responsibilities in management. Management must be balanced, none of the partners should not be able to make the other partner to do something that does not coincide with their policies and objectives. The degree of influence of an organization in managing partnerships is based on several elements¹⁸:

- Economic resources;
- Technology;
- Unique experience;
- Transfer of know-how and good practices;

In the field of higher education two types of strategic partnerships could be implemented. **The first** is a network of partner universities in which all partners are equal. **The second** is bilateral and trilateral agreements between several universities.

IUC experience shows that both types of partnerships are important and are of strategic importance for promoting the introduction of short cycle in higher education. Partnerships are necessary and crucial for the practice realization for student exchange, credit transfer, recognition of diplomas. Only in this way the competitiveness of higher education will increase, the quality of education offered will improve, and the requirements and business needs will be taken into account. All this will result in a successful realisation of the students in the labor market and economic stability of the sector. Good opportunity to build and develop innovative strategic partnerships between educational institutions has a European and international programs that Bulgarian universities should benefit from.

7. Recommendations for the successful development of efficient and innovative partnerships in higher education:

As a result of round tables, focus groups and surveys within the **Short-term education in the U.S. and Europe: Addressing the social and economic needs 2008-2010** project, implemented within the Atlantis programme made the following conclusions and

¹⁸ Source: LSP Spirit Project

recommendations that would promote introduction of short cycle in the higher education system in Bulgaria.

1. Partnership is a key to improving the quality of higher education in Bulgaria and the introduction of short cycle in the higher education system in Bulgaria.

2. The partnership is a key element in the development of higher education in all European and non European country. To build innovative strategic partnerships it is necessary:

- to initiate and develop partnerships between business and universities;
- to initiate partnerships with potential employers in order to give the student practice in the learning process;
- to create partnerships with business and industry organizations to explore the labor market and discuss the training programs;
- to develop training modules for the introduction of short-cycle training for employed with the participation of training institutions, universities, business organizations;
- to initiate and develop partnerships with universities on European and international level aimed at streamlining the programs of training and partnership initiatives for credit transfer and student mobility.

The implementation of these recommendations will lead to the creation of real conditions to improve the quality of higher education and create conditions for development of various forms, methods and means of higher education, including short-term higher education.

CONCLUSION

University of the 21 century has a new function and it is expressed in offering a variety of programs which enhance the skills of people in accordance with individual needs and requirements of business¹⁹. The advantages of short-cycle higher education that offers training for a shorter period, while facilitating access to higher academic degree for those who have decided to retrain further at a later stage of their career.

According to Eurostat by 2030 students in Europe will fall by about 2 million because of population ageing. Pessimistic forecasts suggest that almost 72 million Europeans will have inadequate training. Thus, while chasing career plans, many workers choose the short program to get through practice and theory of knowledge and skills and set the clock to the fast-developing world of business and technology. The role of short-cycle higher education is entirely consistent with the concept of lifelong learning, originating from technological innovations and their application in the workplace. Last but not least, short-cycle higher education provides opportunities for universities to reform their traditional educational policy by developing flexible curricula that harmonize with current trends in the labour market and account business needs.

Continued qualification which underlies the short-term higher education programs, provides the potential for increased competitiveness and suitability of the labour market for workers in economies based on knowledge. The creation of programs leading to the acquisition of double degrees in the short-cycle higher education will contribute to achieving these goals. The described in this Handbook good practice in building strategic partnerships is the result of a study designed to lay the foundations for the creation of programs for double degrees within two years of higher education programs. At this stage a similar project in Bulgaria cannot be implemented, due to objective reasons and the purpose of the preliminary study of good practices in building strategic partnerships is that it can be applied in a long-term plan, provided there is a change in the status quo of higher education in Bulgaria.

¹⁹ Todor Radev (International University College). Short-Cycle Higher Education within the Framework of the Bulgarian Higher Education System. Report, presented at the international conference "Recognition and Accreditation of Short-Cycle Higher Education Programs in Europe and the United States, June 15 – 17, 2009

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