

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AS PROMOTERS OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT – CONCLUSIONS OF A EUROPEAN UNION PROJECT

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Abstract: The present paper aims at making a succinct overview of the EU regional development policies and strategies taking into consideration the deductive method, i.e. presenting these policies from the global/European level through the national-regional/county level up to the institutional one and having them exemplified by a concrete EU project implemented in the field of human resource development – as we are a higher education institution mainly interested in developing labour force. We are not only presenting the aims of the regional policies, but also some of their implementation forms, so that everybody could have a clearer picture of what and how can be done in order to develop a certain area, and what the short term and long term consequences of these development projects are.

The main goal/objective of the EU regional development policies is to reduce economic and social discrepancies between different EU regions and its means for accomplishing this are the EU Structural Funds/*European Social Funds, European agricultural orientation and Guarantees Funds, European Regional Development Funds, Fisheries Orientation Fund*/.

Out of these the most interesting for us are the EU Structural Funds, whose main **objectives are** alleviating discrepancies between states and regions with a different level / where the GDP per capita is below 75% of the EU average /. Thus, in order to comply with this goal, 1/3 of community budget is allocated to regions struggling with structural changes and severe unemployment.

If we have a look at development policies and strategies at national level we cannot help taking into consideration the ‘**New Hungary**’ **Development Plan /NDP II/** which comprises the main objectives, thematic priorities of the national development in the following couple of years.

The **thematic and regional priorities** of the new development strategy are the following:

- development of economy;
- development of transport;
- social renewal;
- environmental and energetic development;
- regional development;
- state reform.

All these priorities are in accordance with the National Action Plan which followed the guidelines of the updated Lisbon National Action Plan, as well as the stipulations of the European Council priorities stated at the meeting in 23-24th March 2006, out of

which **knowledge and innovation, SMBs, expanding employment, new energy policy** are the most highlighted ones.

As a higher education institution with missionary responsibility towards the community it acts in, we are primarily interested in „social renewal” as we are aware of the fact that the changing society ’s conflicts and problems can only be solved by a new mind, a personality having a new way of thinking and acting, being prepared for all challenges that the complete social, economic, political modifications have brought upon. Human resource development lies at the basis of the new society, as MAN is the main drive of any social change and also the token of any success in any community.

The basis and main objective of the Hungarian Development Plan is to create an innovative, knowledge-based economy; in this respect the national development conception is being defined and agreed upon by the 97/2005. (XII.25) Parliament Act which also emphasizes the role of Research&Development, as well as innovation.

In accordance with the national development plan’s stipulations, the creation and development of regional research capacities, territorial knots or regional centres (and this is where the higher education institutions have an overwhelming role) is absolutely necessary and they can be considered the drives and coordinators of further development process, as well.

Among all these, the 3rd priority, i.e. of **social renewal** is of utmost interest for us, as in this sense human resource development is the token of sustainable development.

The process of **social renewal** may involve the following aspects:

- improving employment;
- improving adaptability skills;
- quality education and access to it provided to everybody;
- developing human resource needed for R&D and innovation;
- health preservation, social inclusion and co-participation;
- developing human infrastructure;
- higher education reform;
- continuation of Bologna process;
- quality development of higher education;
- establishing regional research centres;
- subsidizing research universities;
- developing talent nurturing institutional structure;
- practice oriented higher education programmes;
- extending technical and natural sciences courses.

The **Békés County regional development conception** is a logical outcome of all the above.

The most important strategic goals and development priorities of our county can be summarised like this:

- creating competitive economic structure;
- developing transport and communication IT systems;
- strengthening internal cohesion, developing cooperative based settlement networks;
- water stock protection and environment development;
- developing external relations and strengthening regional cohesion;
- developing human resources.

At the beginning of 2004, the Hungarian Government, hand in hand with the European Union, has elaborated a set of development priorities and call for proposals that have covered all areas of the Hungarian society and economy, in order to decrease problems and to provide development opportunities; our institution has been involved in human resource development programmes, out of which we would like to present the tender submitted to the **HEFOP 3.3.-Higher Education Structure and Content Development** call for proposal.

The **long-term objectives** of this tender bid are the following:

- integrating higher education graduates into the labour market;
- developing adaptability skills;
- preparing the country for joining the European Higher Education Area.

Its **immediate objectives** are as follows:

- flexible reaction to expectations of social and economic environment;
- adaptability to further education and retraining (LLL);
- EHEA compatible degrees;
- training programmes providing environment-conscious sustainable development and equal chances.

The human resource development of the Tessedik Sámuel College Faculty of economics that has been approved of by the European Commission is entitled **LIFE CHANCES IN A COMMON EUROPE** and has a duration of three years, starting with 1st November 2004 (01.11 2004- 30.09. 2007 /35 months/).

The project planned to deliver activities in 2 components:

- **1st component -POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMMES**
- **2nd component-RETRAINING PROGRAMMES**

3 consortial partners have contributed to the implementation of the programmes:

- Tessedik Sámuel College- Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Agriculture, Water and Environment Management;
- Békéscsaba Regional Training Centre;
- Békés County Job Centre.

As far as the content of the project is concerned we first concentrated on the following activities:

- elaborating common strategy/database/ work instruments;
- labour market surveys;
- employer/employee needs assessment;
- curriculum development workshops;
- defining/recruiting target groups;
- education.

Within the first component we focused on **POST-SECONDARY VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES**

Accredited post-secondary programmes:

- **updating old programmes** (*institutional communication, agricultural management assistant, waste management technologist*);
- **elaborating and validating new programmes** (*civil mediation, landscape management gardener, water stock management technologist*).

The basic activities within this segment of the programme were:

- Labour market needs assessment;
- curriculum development (Canadian DACUM-SCID method);

- elaborating accreditation documents and handing them to Ministry of Education;
- recruiting, selecting target groups;
- 30.09./07.10.2005-starting courses in Békéscsaba and Szarvas - **Institutional Communication** (31 students) **Waste Management Technologist** (17 students).

For the courses that have been upgraded, as well as for the new ones the colleagues of the TSF-MVKFK have written manuals:

- Agricultural management assistant course:
 - Enterprise Studies I
 - Enterprise Studies II
- Waste Management Technologist course:
 - Public Utilities Studies
 - Basics of Technical Engineering

In the second component of the project we focused on **RETRAINING PROGRAMMES**, delivering the following basic activities:

- Labour market needs assessment;
- curriculum development (Canadian DACUM-SCID method);
- recruiting, selecting target groups;
- Starting courses

Euro-entrepreneurship I - 299(14 groups)

Euro-entrepreneurship II- 426(16 groups).

The elements and modules of the **Euro-entrepreneurship courses I, II** are the following:

- Foreign languages (500 English/300 German)
- European Union Studies (60)
- Basics of Entrepreneurship (30)
- European Union project management (30)
- Information Technology (50)
- Personality Development Training (30/group)

Results achieved in the first year of the project:

- 41 experts;
- 8 lecturers;
- 299 beneficiaries;
- 26 students of the college;
- 31 colleagues;
- 7 elaborated Post-secondary or retraining courses.

Results achieved in the second year of the project:

- 43 experts and lecturers
- 426 +29+17=471 students in Békéscsaba and Szarvas
- 4 manuals
- 2 workshops
- 1 conference

CONCLUSIONS – the experiences gained though implementation of the project are:

- Modification and extension of college role;
- missionary role in the region;
- inducing practice-oriented and economy triggered R&D activities;

- great interest towards the courses;
- setting up regional expert networks/ networks of excellence/creating/developing team spirit;
- developing project-type thinking;
- providing sustainable development (each old project is the forerunner of a new one);
- extending partnership- gaining new partners;
- excessive red-tape and bad synchronization (e.g. course validation);
- difficult monitoring increased expectations towards the college in the region;
- main actor in HR development in the region-NDP II: „*universities are the drives of innovation*”.

Knowing all this, it is important to draw the conclusion that we can only achieve social and economic progress if we consider our world as an entity, as a whole, in which the most important protagonist is MAN- and when considering human resource development, we can't help admitting that SCHOOLS and TEACHERS have the main role in this process, which also obliges us to take up a missionary role in improving our lives and communities. It is a moral obligation of all those who can give to pass on to their human fellows from their knowledge, their expertise, their humanity, as it was already expressed by philosophers and scholars of the past:

„...man is predestinated to accept help from his fellows and he himself provide help to his mates.”

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