



Leading and Managing Change in Higher Education (La MANCHE)

2nd PARTNER MEETING

MEETING MINUTES

Date: 23rd April 2013

Time: 9:30 am

Venue: UCB boardroom

Attendees: see list attached

1. Opening address by the project coordinator Christina Armutlieva and Paul Kitchen, UCB institutional coordinator. Christina Armutlieva welcomed the La MANCHE project partners and expressed her gratitude to UCB for organizing the partner meeting. Colleagues meeting the consortium in its whole for the first time were introduced. A short overview of the 2nd partner meeting agenda and the programme for the day was given. During the first half of the day the partners will focus on the processes of project management and administration. After lunch the progress in WP2 and the results achieved will be presented. In the late afternoon the partners will split in groups and start working in two parallel workshops, one dedicated to WP3 and attended by the partners from the Partner Countries and members of IUC team and the other one with the participation of the EU project partners in charge of WP4.

2. Project management and administration

Christina Armutlieva explained that the discussion will cover the following main topics: i) general project management information, ii) interim reports, iii) co-financing, iv) staff costs, v) travel costs and costs of stay, vi) equipment. The project coordinator informed the consortium that all 28 Partnership Agreements were signed in the period of December 2012 – April 2013. In some of the Partner Countries national legislation obliges the partner institutions to register the project or respectively the signed partnership agreements at different national authorities (e.g. Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education etc.) Apart from Belarus, the project has been registered in all other Partner Countries where this is a requirement. Prior to the project registration in Belarus no pre-advanced payment can be made to any of the partner institutions.

Partners were reminded that at any stage of the project management the following project documents should be used as reference point: (1) The Grant Agreement with its Annexes; (2) Guidelines for the Use of

the Grant, (3) the latest updated version of the FAQ for projects approved in 2012, (4) EACEA Financial Information Kit. All partners possess a copy of the Grant Agreement and all its Annexes. All listed project management related documents have been circulated among the partners in the very beginning of the project, apart from the Grant Agreement and its Annexes all other documents have been uploaded within the Project Documentation section in the partner login at the project website and could be accessed through EACEA website. Christina Armutlieva asked partners who have participated in other Tempus projects to share their experience with monitoring on the spot and to explain the procedure they've witnessed first-hand. Tea Gergedava told that according to her best knowledge a monitoring held at TSU has focussed mainly on the project activities' progress and deliverables in place.

Christina Armutlieva reminded the partners that according to the Partnership Agreement each partner institution should submit seven interim reports towards IUC. The Reports and Claim Schedule is Annex VI in the Partnership Agreement. The project coordinator drew partners' attention to the fact that two of the interim reports (due 15th January 2014 and 15th October 2015) are of particular importance not only in terms of the partner institutions individual project progress reporting but also with regard to the reports IUC is obliged to submit towards EACEA. Partners are requested to keep strictly these deadlines as any delay in submission would affect the entirety and the quality of the project interim and final reports IUC will submit towards EACEA. An interim report submitted after 15th January 2014 will not be included in the report of IUC towards EACEA due 15th April 2015. A final report submitted by a partner after 15th October 2015 may not be possible to be taken into account and included in the final report IUC will submit towards EACEA. According to the project activities' envisaged progress and in line with the Grant Agreement a request for 2nd pre-financing instalment is planned to be submitted along with the interim report. According to the Grant Agreement, the second pre-financing installment may not be paid until at least 70% of the first pre-financing installment has been spent and actually paid.

A full interim report submitted by a partner institution consists of the following: 1) description of the activities completed and statement of the costs incurred; 2) originals of all Time sheets, Staff conventions, IMRs and Travel and subsistence costs breakdown, prepared and dully sighed and stamped as required in the Guidelines for the Use of the Grant; 3) originals or certified copies of all supporting and payment documents. In regard of co-financing, the partners were informed that the reporting documents to justify costs covered by funds outside the project as part of the partners' commitment to co-financing, are the same as those for costs covered by the grant.

Christina Armutlieva made a short overview of the rules for claiming staff costs. For the purposes of any financial evaluation and audit, the following documents are required:

- 1) a document proving formal employment relationship between the employee and the employer, e.g. a formal employment contract. A certified copy of this should be sent for all members of the institutional project teams to the Project Coordinator;
- 2) documents proving that the declared staff costs are "identifiable and verifiable, being recorded in the accounting reports of the beneficiary;
- 3) documents proving that the staff costs claimed correspond to the institution usual remuneration policy, e.g. employment contract and a copy of the staff members' pay slips from the last six months.

In regard to the usual remuneration policy Ruben Aghgashyan explained a concern that the daily staff costs calculated in the project budget for his institution are higher than those currently applicable. He asked if partners could increase the number of working days in order to approach the staff costs budget envisaged. Christina replied that the number of working days for the activities envisaged in the project has been approved by the assessors and is included in the Grant Agreement. In this regard no significant changes in the numbers of working days can be introduced. Only minor changes are possible that will not affect the

total number of working days per work package. The working days in the development and exploitation workpackages correspond to the project outcomes and main deliverables which are listed and stipulated in the Grant Agreement's Annexes.

Christina Armutlieva informed the partners that a copy of the staff members' employment contracts and the pay slips should be send as soon as possible after the meeting ends.

In compliance with the information added in question 54 in the FAQ for Tempus IV projects approved for funding in 2012, the following two different cases are possible:

1) a staff member is remunerated directly from the project as a top-up to normal salary. In this case a proof of payment needs to be available to confirm that the payment has taken place (bank transfer proof); in this case a contract for the work to be completed within the project should be signed between the partner institution and each of the project team members. Christina Armutlieva said that the content and structure of this contract is subject to national legislation and could differ from country to country or from institution to institution. She will provide the partners with a template of this type of contract applicable in Bulgaria for their information. Partners were reminded that they should always act in compliance with their national legislation. Further to a request from Ruben, the project coordinator said that to partners with less project experience facing difficulties when preparing the basic project documentation (e.g. timesheets) she could present examples of good practices in filling out this type of documents.

2) a staff member is not remunerated directly from the project. Institutions are allowed to charge staff costs as a form of "compensation" for people who have been authorized to work for the Tempus project as part of their normal working time within the institution. In this case the following documents should be kept with the project accounts: time sheets, employment contract listing the task, declaration signed by the Rector/Dean etc.). The level of remuneration must be in line with the salary slip of the staff member concerned. The regular salary slip must be available in order to check the level of remuneration.

In terms of the travel costs and costs for stay Christina Armutlieva once again explained the major rules related to reporting and costs eligibility. In particular she outlined the importance of providing a document clarifying the internal practices for paying/reimbursing travel and subsistence costs which are in line with usual remuneration policies (in English). It was noted that the ceilings for a particular destination country can be claimed in case this is in line with the sending institution's usual policy for paying accommodation and subsistence costs for this country and in accordance with the living standards in the country of the mobility. Christina Armutlieva said that examples of documents proving the usual policy for paying costs of stay will be uploaded for partners' information.

In term of equipment the project coordinator explained the changes in the type of equipment approved by EACEA. Instead of video-conference system one laptop and one large screen TV will be purchase for each of the 23 Partner Country institutions. The descriptions of these items had been emailed to all Partner Country partners and the purchased items should have similar specifications. The total costs of the purchase cannot exceed 3000 EUR as envisaged in the approved budget. In line with the information provided under Question 79 regarding the purchasing procedures in a multi-country project from FAQ approved for funding in 2012 the following procedure will be applied: one purchasing procedure will be organized in each of the Partner Countries by grouping all the recipient institutions together due to the economies in case of bulk procedure. The payment to the chosen provider will be made by IUC directly from the project bank account from the partners' budget.

All relevant project management information, materials from the partner meetings and information and materials related to the deliverables in the WP2 is accessible through the partner login space on the project website. The project coordinator has created accounts for all partner institutions, the username is the

partner contact email address, and the password is *tempus* and could be changed once the user enters the system.

3. WP2: Analysis of Leadership Skills and Management Models: results achieved and lessons learned

Corinne Stewart (ASD, France), WP2 leader made an overview of the results achieved in the WP2 so far. She congratulated the project partners on the work completed and outlined the huge amount of data and information collected. All Partner Country institutions have submitted their reports based on the questionnaire the EU partners had designed in December 2012. The questionnaire was circulated among the partners in the end of 2012. The main purposes of the questionnaire were to assess the leadership skills and competences of senior managers in the Partner Countries higher education institutions, to identify the existing organizational structures, management models and reporting relations at the institutions, to evaluate the learning resources and materials in leadership and organizational behavior available at Partner Countries higher education institutions and to analyse the local environment in which each institution operates. The self-assessment reports are accessible through the Partner Login at the project website. The work on the elaboration of the external analysis for the five Partner Countries was distributed among the EU partners as follows:

ASD, France: Armenia

IUC, Bulgaria: Belarus

IPB, Portugal: Georgia

UTH, Greece: Moldova

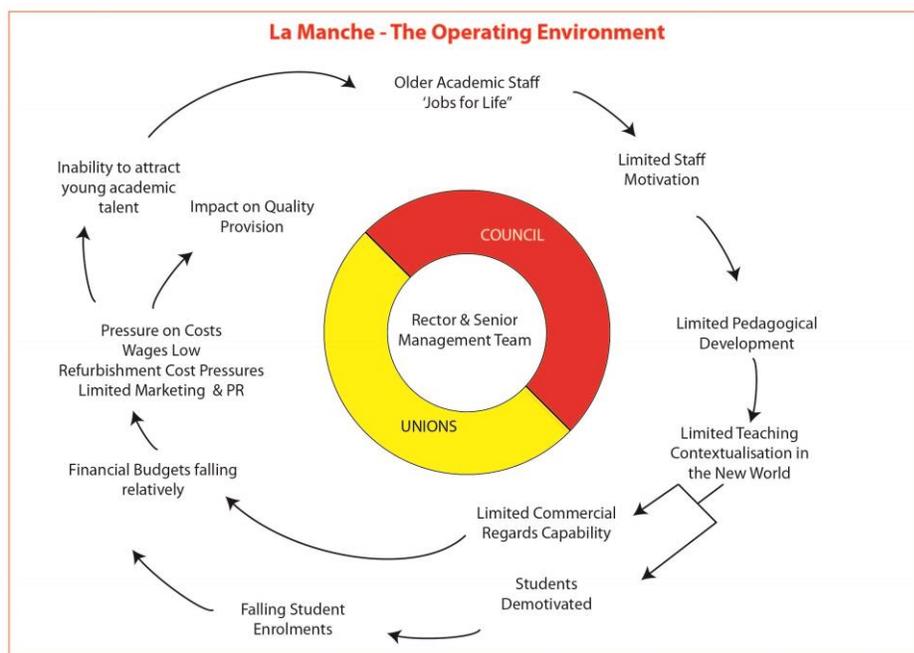
UCB and CC, UK: Ukraine

The six EU partner institutions prepared the external report on each of the five La MANCHE Partner Countries. Apart from the report on Georgia, all other reports have been already prepared. The delay with the report for Georgia is due to changes in the project team at IPB, the report is expected to be ready soon. Corinne Stewart presented shortly the results of the self-assessment reports submitted by the Armenian higher education institutions in La MANCHE which had been summarized in the external report for Armenia. Her presentation focused on the SWOT analysis ASD had prepared.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2/5 universities have a "Strategic development plan" - Labor code of the Republic of Armenia - Open competitions for staff and Professor recruitments - Learning resources regarding leadership and organizational available (Libraries, Courses) - Participation in international conferences - Participation in Research & Development programs - Implication of students in scientific decision-making bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservative Higher Education System (resistant to change) - Lack of communication between Management and staff regarding university objectives, educational reforms... - National labor laws create obstacles to hiring and dismissing employees - Decreasing number of applicants/students in 2011 - Lack of staff training and initiatives - Low level of professionalism and skilled employees
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recruitment of younger scientists - Mobility periods for teachers and researchers in the European Higher Educational area - Specific training sessions in HR and Management - Applying modern technology in teaching - Internships for students - Implementation of the Bologna process - Better university-industry ties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of funds - Lack of resources - Lack of staff and student motivation - Low salaries compared with those in industry - Inadequate career path models - Age of Professors - Lack of technological know-how - Non implementation of the Bologna process

- Implementation of an institutional quality assurance system	- Lack of mobility periods / sabbaticals abroad
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Sylvia Bradley gave an overview of the results of the self-assessment reports of the seven higher education institutions from La MANCHE in Ukraine. She presented these on behalf of UCB and CC. The main findings in the Ukrainian self-assessment reports had been summarized in the following scheme which was presented by Sylvia.



Nikos Triantafyllopoulos gave an overview of the main findings in the external report for Moldova. When presenting the main conclusions made based on the evidence provided in the self-assessment reports of the Moldovan universities Nikos pointed out that strict hierarchy, the bureaucracy and the lack of autonomy are the main features which had proven typical for Moldova.

In her presentation of the results of the external report on Belarus Christina focused on the following topics: (1) the techniques and tools for engaging the academic community in the pursuit of the goals of the higher education institutions in Belarus, (2) the key players in the processes of initiative provision, decision making, approval, implementation, responsibility and control, (3) challenges and obstacles for change at institutional level, (4) main challenges faced in the processes of HRM and (5) identified training needs.

4. Parallel workshops on WP3 and WP4

The workshop in WP3 was led by Angela Niculitsa. She made an overview of WP3 “Changing HEIs in Societies in Transition: In-depth Study Report” and presented the specific objectives the representatives of the Partner Countries will fulfil. She explained that the main activity for each partner institution will be to elaborate a case study paper consisting of the following main parts: 1) analysis of one particular process of change in the society, economic environment and/or the national higher education system, and 2) a detailed case study (good practice) showing how this higher education institution has addressed this challenge. The processes of transformation and reform may be related to internationalization, increasing competition, decreasing public funding, outdated curricula, irrelevance of graduates’ skills to labour market needs, students drop out, weak links between education, research and innovation, increasing use of ICT in

education etc. Angela specified that it is recommended that the institutions within one Partner Country would choose a different challenge. The case study template will be designed by EU partners in the consortium and will be distributed among the Partner Countries representatives. Partners asked for further clarification regarding the type of good practice to be presented and the deadlines.

The workshop in WP4 was led by Rolando Dias from IPB, the WP4 leader. The following activities will be completed in WP4:

1. Online conference of EU partners aimed at identifying good governance case studies and distributing work among different teams: to be held on 22nd May on oovoo.com.
2. Elaboration of syllabuses in leadership and change management, including methodology for training of trainers: these syllabuses will be used during the training sessions in change management and leadership at the partner meeting in Portugal in the end of October 2013.
3. Development of guidance materials in leadership and in change management: to be uploaded on the project website.
4. Identification and description in case study form of 15 innovative governance practices applied in EU higher education institutions (compiled in a handbook): Rolando started the discussion by presenting good practices that had proved successful at IPB and made an overview of other possible topics for the case studies the partners may have experience and expertise in. It was stressed that when identifying a good practice to address challenges related to higher education modernization agenda, it should be born in mind to what this practice will be transferable and applicable in the La MANCHE Partner Countries. Sylvia Broadley suggested focusing on the results of the self-assessment reports as these have clearly identified the difficulties the Partner Countries institutions are coping with nowadays and the areas where they would need support.



Leading and Managing Change in Higher Education (La MANCHE)

2nd PARTNER MEETING WORKSHOP ON LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

MINUTES

Date: 24th April 2013

Time: 9:45 am

Venue: UCB

Attendees: see list attached

1. Opening address by Prof. Gary Wood, Deputy Vice Chancellor of UCB. Dr Richard Riley, Dean of Business School at UCB welcomed the participants and introduced shortly the agenda of the day. In the framework of the workshop in leadership and change management called Reaching Excellence in Education through Effective Educational Leadership, in the morning external experts in higher education governance and policies will make presentations focussing on different aspects of leadership and change management in higher education. The lectures will be live streamed and could be followed by project team members in all 29 La MANCHE institutions. In the afternoon the partners present in the meeting will take part in the workshop dedicated to the topic of Opening spaces for students as co-creators.

2. UCB perspective and experience

Gary Wood started the presentation by providing an overview of UCB's profile and main objectives. UCB is a new university that (1) is mixed economic provider, (2) focuses on vocational education and training and is (3) teaching and learning intensive. It was explained that nowadays in the UK higher education policies and development are of high political interest and strongly depend on the economic conditions. As a result of this the higher education system is going through a period of significant change. The following topics are high on the further education policy agenda: higher level skills, apprenticeships, freeing colleges from central government control, professionalization of teachers, and students' loans for 24+ and local enterprise partnerships. The following main challenges could be identified in the higher education environment: completion, financial instability, diversity, mergers, acquisitions, collaboration and innovation.

Gary Wood gave an overview of the processes of transition currently ongoing in the field of vocational education and training in the UK. The main trends are the shifts from (1) VET as second chance to VET as

driver for economic growth, (2) planning to innovation, (3) lower level skills to higher education and (4) further education sector to vocational ecosystem. In order to respond to the external changes and challenges UCB applies the following curriculum strategies: the curriculum (1) is vocational, (2) is teaching and learning focussed, (3) secures growth in further education and higher education, (4) is diverse in terms of modes of delivery, (5) maintains and enhances its quality.

In the second part of the presentation of UCB perspective and experience Richard Riley spoke about the key success factors for the development of the higher education institutions. Those include among inter alia the ability to develop courses in response to market needs, ability to raise revenue from additional sources such as research funds, as well as revenue from corporations for research undertaken on their behalf, the ability to take advantage of government funding such as grants. Having a good reputation is crucial and very important in order to be able to attract the top students and academics. Richard Riley pointed out that there is no doubt that Change is difficult in any organisation, and higher education institutions face specific challenges as well in the process of change management. The three key actions to follow in this process are (1) start at the top, (2) collaborate and (3) engage. The successful change depends on the 4C formula's application, namely cooperation, coordination, collaboration and communication.

3. Leadership and change management: an industrial perspective

John Rider shortly presented himself. He has worked at board level in major PLCs and has wide sector knowledge of business turnaround, integration and change management. Over the years he had obtained extensive experience in running organizations in tough times. In the beginning he focused on different mechanisms for linking higher education and business such as the career centers and services at the universities and the variety of internship programmes offered. He presented a successful initiative for provision of internships in the framework of the West Midlands Graduate Internship project funded through the European Social Fund. Along with detailed information on the project, its outcomes and the results achieved, he shared some important lessons learned, such as "Perfection is impossible", "People make the difference – 'work with the willing'", "Remain positive - avoid bureaucracy – encourage 'Can Do' ".

In the second part of his presentation John provided basic theoretical background of leadership and change management and focused on John Kotter's eight step change model, Kepner – Tregoe rational process models and the Nolan principle of public life. He reflected on such themes as leadership versus management and the new success factors, namely speed, flexibility, collaboration and innovation. John shared lessons he had learned through his own professional and personal life experience. In the end of his presentation he was asked a question about change resistance and how he had cope with that over the years. He answered the change resistance should be faced and tackled as soon as it proves to be a real problem. The person or group resisting change are to be given a detailed explanation of the motives and the nature of the change, communication is a key factor. If however they refuse to embrace change, the leader should consider the opportunity to introduce changes in the team.

4. Natural perspective: change through infrastructure and skills

In the beginning Simon Whittemore, Programme Manager at JISC presented himself and the organization he is currently working for. Simon leads Business and Community Engagement (BCE) at JISC. The BCE portfolio is designed to support institutions in their "third mission", i.e. the management of strategic partnerships with external organizations delivering economic and social benefit. It drives innovation in education and research and stimulates change, capacity building and digital capability. BCE focuses its efforts in supporting higher education and further education institutions in the processes of major change. In regard to the need for change Simon made an overview of the pressures and key issues faced by higher education institutions in the context of the current financial austerity. In terms of educational institutions' accountability he pointed out the value of teaching to parents and prospective students, the importance and impact of research in society and economy and the collaboration with the public and the local regions. Due

to the increased competition higher education institutions are forced to become more international and more sustainable. As customers students are at the heart of the educational system. It is of high importance to the institutions to secure access to knowledge and to focus on research and innovation. The university – business collaboration is crucial and the UK government intends to 'make the UK the best place in the world for university-business collaboration'. In his presentation Simon paid particular attention to the business and community engagement of higher education institutions also known as the third mission. He provided examples of business and community engagement, e.g. public engagement through public events, festivals etc, employer engagement, knowledge engagement such as consultancy and collaborative and contract research and lifelong learning through community-based learning. In the end of his presentation he provided concrete examples of JISC business and community engagement resources designed to facilitate the change and innovation in the higher education sector.

5. Leadership skills for change in higher education

Lesly Huxley from the Leadership Foundation started her presentation by introducing the organization. She has over 25 years' experience in higher education in the UK and Europe. Her research and practice has particular focus on organizational change and development. She leads change capability programmes for the UK' Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. The foundation was founded in 2004 and provides a dedicated service of support and advice on leadership, governance and management for all the UK's universities and higher education colleges. The strategic objectives include leadership, governance, change, innovation, networks, capacity building for leadership at higher education within and outside the UK, and partnerships. The main activities include leadership development, change capability, research, conferences, seminars, consultancy, coaching etc. Lesley focussed on the main challenges and opportunities for leaders in the field of higher education related to funding models, completion, performance, consumer demand, internationalization and equality and diversity. In the second part of her presentation Lesley showed examples of how the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education is helping development of leadership and change management skills. This happens through different types of initiatives such as Top Management programme, the Future Leaders programme, the Change Academy etc.

6. Opening space for students as co-creators

In the afternoon Lesley Huxley, Richard Riley and Sarah Digby from UCB led a workshop with focus on students' leadership skills development and involvement in the main processes at higher education institutions. One of the chief goals is to empower students to become more actively involved in decision making at the higher education institutions. Through different types of project activities grassroots leadership initiatives among students will be stimulated and supported. The project partners split in four group and were asked to brainstorm within their teams on how students could become change agents and co-creators at the higher education institutions. They were asked to answer questions *Why?*, *What?*, *When?*, *Where?*, *Who?* and *How?* students will involve as co-creators.

Team 1 sees students as No 1 stakeholder, main customer and vector for new ideas driving innovation. They could get involved as co-creators in the educational environment, governance processes, internationalization, financing etc. This would start during the second year of their studies on the undergraduate level and during the first year of their studies on the master level and postgraduate studies. Students could make a difference through the students unions and membership in university governance bodies. Regular meetings with the senior management, participation in different evaluations and feedback provision, presence in social media and networks are some of the ways the students could guarantee their presence and impact within the institutions.

For team 2 involvement of students in the institutions governance and functioning is of high importance for the following reasons: to improve their leadership skills, to receive "customer" feedback, to receive positive

energy, to improve their employability, to increase the quality of the strategic plan. This could happen through participation in the students council, the senate, the faculty council etc. Students should be able to interact on a regular basis with the administrative staff, career centers, alumni offices and associations etc. Students involvement could start from the second semester of their studies and it could be face-to-face, online and through meetings on different levels.

Team 3 sees students as main customers who provide valuable feedback and are young and creative. They could participate in the processes of change curricula and teaching staff evaluation. Feedback should be obtained after the service in question has been provided. It is important to outline that the process of students involvement is a two-way street and depends both on them and the institutions' management.

For team 4 the customers in the field of higher education are the students and the alumni organizations. Therefore involving of the students should be possible both during their studies but also after they've graduated. The feedback of the employers is also of high importance. Students and alumnis could be active online (through social media, online surveys, forums and chat rooms) and "off-line" (via interviews, meetings, workshops, contact hours).

Murat Erguvan from IBSU, Anastaisya Makarenko from NTU KhPI, Corinne Stewart from ASD and Boris Lezhava from CU reported on the results of the discussions within the four workgroups. In the end of the workshop Richard Riley summarized the main messages by pointing out and commenting on some key words and expressions mentioned such as *future, see it all, feedback, representation, leadership, skills*. Christina Armutlieva thanked the team of UCB for the productive and interesting programme of the second day of the meeting.



Leading and Managing Change in Higher Education (La MANCHE)

2nd PARTNER MEETING WORKSHOP ON LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND MEETING CLOSING SESSION

MINUTES

Date: 25th April 2013

Time: 9:30 am

Venue: UCB

Attendees: see list attached

1. EU funding opportunities in the field of education and research

In the framework of the workshop in leadership and change management for Reaching Excellence in Education through Effective Educational Leadership UCB has invited Abdul Qadir from Birmingham City to speak about EU funding opportunities and the expected changes to European funding in higher education context. Abdul has over fifteen years of experience in management of European projects. In the context of the upcoming changes related to replacing the currently running programmes supporting higher education on European level with the new funding programme Erasmus for All or Yes Europe, Abdul provided a short overview of the policy context. He focussed on Europe 2020 and the five headline targets agreed in the fields of employment (75% of 20-64 year-olds to be employed), climate change and renewable energy, education (reducing school drop-out rates below 10%, increasing the number of 30 – 34 year-olds obtaining higher education degree) and combating poverty and social inclusion. He shortly presented the current funding landscape. Abdul provided an overview of the Yes Europe/ Erasmus for All programme and the key areas and activities it will provide funding for. He pointed out the currently ongoing procedure for application and renewal of the Erasmus University Charter and the deadline for submission. Abdul presented the international cooperation initiatives within the higher education sector to be funded through the new programme.

Afterwards he presented the programme Horizon 2020 to substitute the 7FP Programme which will become the flagship initiative for securing Europe's global competitiveness. It will address such major concerns as climate change, developing sustainable transport and mobility, making renewable energy more affordable,

ensuring food safety and security, or coping with the challenge of an ageing population. The programme's priorities will be excellence in science, industrial leadership and societal challenges. In the end Abdul asked the audience if they have any questions and suggested to remain in touch in case partners present would like to discuss some of the issues raised.

2. European Higher Education Agenda

Christina Armutlieva presented shortly Gergana Dimitrova, Assistant Professor at IUC who holds a Ph.D. in political sciences from the Central European University in Budapest. Gergana is also member of the European projects division at IUC and was closely involved in the process of La MANCHE bid development.

In the beginning of her presentation Gergana provided a picture of how is Europe currently performing in the field of higher education compared to its major economic competitors and leaders in higher education as the US, Canada, Japan. Based on statistics in average the EU is standing far behind in terms of percentage of 25 – 64 years olds with higher education. There is a clear need to increase these figures otherwise Europe's economic development is threatened to lag behind constantly. The European Higher Education Agenda was created with the aim to tackle the above mentioned negative trends and to increase the competitiveness of the European higher education system and the European economy as a whole. Five major areas of intervention had been identified where efforts should focus.

The first main area where initiatives at institutional, national and European level are to be stimulated is the increase of attainment levels. This could happen through (1) reaching out to broader sections of society and attracting more non-traditional students, (2) developing clear progression routes from vocational and other education types into higher education (3) reducing drop-out rate and (4) training more researchers.

It is a well-known fact recognized by both by higher education institutions and the business that the quality of higher education in Europe and its relevance to the needs of society and the economy should be significantly improved. Possible ways to achieve this through (1) attuning curricula to current and emerging labour market needs, (2) developing flexible and innovative learning approaches and methods of delivering education, (3) improving the competence and motivation of teachers and researchers and (4) aligning researcher training with the needs of the knowledge-intensive labour market and in particular with the requirements of SMEs. Within the La MANCHE consortium it goes without saying that the benefits for the higher education institutions involved in different types of international cooperation initiatives are huge. The internationalization of the higher education system and institutions through mobilities and cross-border cooperation will strengthen the quality of the education.

The fourth main area of intervention within the European higher education is the so called knowledge triangle between education, business and research. The efforts should focus on (1) stimulating the development of entrepreneurial, creative and innovation skills and promoting innovation in higher education, (2) strengthening the knowledge-transfer infrastructure of higher education institutions, (3) making cooperation with business a core activity of the university and turning them into centres of knowledge and expertise engaged with regional economic development.

The La MANCHE project focuses on capacity building and improvement of governance mechanisms at the higher education institutions involved. In this regard the partners are well familiar with the initiatives to be undertaken within the fifth main area of intervention of the European Higher Education Modernization Agenda. It aims at creating effective governance and funding mechanisms in support of excellence and includes measures for better targeting of public spending by linking funding mechanisms to performance and to different institutional profiles, funding sources diversification and investment in professional management of HEIs.

3. Discussion on topics related to the European Higher Education Agenda

Christina Armutlieva thanked Gergana for the extensive information and invited the partners present to ask questions. The data presented by Gergana concerned the EU as a whole or the EU countries. Christina asked the partners to share information on their countries regarding the percentage of graduates with higher education degree. In terms of investment in research and innovation Christina mentioned that the percentage for Bulgaria is very low, approx. 1,5% far away from the European benchmark of 3%. The partners from Belarus said that the figure for Belarus is significantly higher. Belarus is currently implementing a national educational programme and according to it this percentage will be 5. Christina thanked the partners for their attention and participation in the last three days and said that now is time to get prepared for the third meeting.

4. Programming of the next partner meeting: Rolando Dias informed the partners that the next meeting will take place at IPB, Braganca in Portugal. He presented shortly the institution and the town of Braganca. The meeting will be organized during the week commencing 21st October 2013. Monday 21st October is day of arrival, Friday, 25th October day of departure. He gave general information on how to reach Braganca and how to apply for a visa for Portugal.

5. Delivering of certificates

6. Debriefing and closing session

On behalf of the consortium Christina Armutlieva expressed her gratitude to Paul Kitchen and the whole team of UCB for the organization and facilitation of the 2nd partner meeting.