



University of Plovdiv "Paisii Hilendarski"

24 Tzar Assen St. ; Plovdiv 4000

Tel.: ++359-32-62-87-96

Fax: ++359-32-63-09-55

To the attention of: Sr. PAOLO MANZELLI
Director of LRE / EGO-CreaNET
Education Research Laboratory / EGO-CreaNET
Via Maragliano 77 -50144 - Firenze - Italia
Tel/Fax:+39/055/332549

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

On behalf of this institution University of Plovdiv and in the capacity which was assigned by our Rector, it is my pleasure to state, that the following Bulgarian partner – Faculty of Philosophy and History of the University of Plovdiv completely agrees with the proposal of inclusion in the 6FP project "MENTAL CHANGE: ACCELERATING INTO THE EUROPEAN FUTURE OF e.GOVERN of KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY", coordinated by LRE: Education Research Laboratory / EGO-CreaNET, Via Maragliano 77 -50144 - Firenze - Italia; with the Director of // EGO-CreaNET Mr. Paolo Manzelli

Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" is the third by size in Bulgaria following the Sofia University and the Technical University but as a University with strong Humanities branches it is considered as second by importance academic institution with far reaching dynamics in the educational procedures and respectful research potential. With the effort of competing the former monopolisation of the higher education it is a good example how non-capital university may achieve better qualities in the curricula and the scientific development. Particularly our proud is that Plovdiv University has produced one of the most effective M.A. programs in European Studies developed jointly with the Aachen University of Technology (RWTH). This Bulgarian-German program is offering the best quality of lectures by the Bulgarian-German faculty and successful internship of the graduates in the EU institutions at Brussels, Strasbourg, etc.

Plovdiv University was founded primarily as educational centre in the sciences and still its Faculties of Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Information Technologies are providing high quality education and supported by a number of successful international projects in different RDT networks.

Another very important issue is that Plovdiv University is hosting an European Documentation Centre chartered by the European Commission. So far it is the only such institution directly attached to the academic environment because the couple of other similar EDC are part of the municipal administration. Plovdiv University EDC has developed an active sequence of events in offering courses on European Integration both to the students, pupils and adults. It is a traditional venue for Jean Monnet courses and other cultural and academic events for the sake of the local community.

Plovdiv University is the major high education institution outside the capital in Bulgaria and as placed in second city of importance in the country - Plovdiv, - it is covering all South and South-East of the Bulgaria. It is hosting the new initiative to gather in the autumn of 2003 some Balkan Universities high executives with the representatives of the local businesses and the cultural community in order to develop common understanding and activity plan for more European

oriented education and convergence of peaceful civic attitudes. The purpose of this working meeting would be to go beyond merely expressing ideas and good will but to enable better network communication throughout the turbulent Balkan region and to put more attention on the elaboration of realistic and practical steps in the local economic, educational and cultural formation.

Plovdiv University has a good record participating in the 5th and 6th Frame Program of the EU it is also a reliable partner for the programs the CLIOH-Net working group and the Tuning Educational Structures in Europe which is contributing to the high quality of the European educational training system with the aim to achieve more coherent results and adapt it to the new management requirements and standards for the human resources development. Altogether the active role in the cooperation within different LEONARDO and TEMPUS sub-programs (Erasmus, Lingua, Grundtwig, etc.) the most recent project is the inclusion of Plovdiv University to the active collaboration for the Erasmus -3 Thematic Net - "Consumer Citizenship Network" for better community practices and coordinated by Norwegian College of Herder/Haskjold.

Another important program was conducting Summer Schools on "Local Government under conditions of European Integration" under the supported by Open Society Institute of Budapest (HESP/LGI). Altogether with the Local Government Initiative a series of joint activities of the regional Association of Rhodopi Municipalities were launched. In their implementation an accumulative effect was perceived in order to stimulate cristalization of the genuine civic attitudes and adaptation of the best European practices. Traditionally Plovdiv University is perceived as a respectful and reliable partner to the municipal authorities and other public entities, to the local, national and international wide NGO network, to the local citizenry and mass media agents.

Stepping onto these realistic achievements Plovdiv University has adequate capacity to collaborate within the "MENTAL CHANGE: ACCELERATING INTO THE EUROPEAN FUTURE OF e.GOVERN of KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY" with its own sub-project as a leading representative of a Regional Interest Group. Our long-standing strategy is to develop a coherent mechanism of collaboration between the regional public authorities and the local enterprises where the academic component should generate the initial start of the introducing updated know-how for the dynamic regional development. To this aim exactly will be convened next meeting of the Balkan universities where Plovdiv is the initiator of redefining the due place for the academic institutions as a centers of excellence to generate new thinking and knowledge based local economy. In this point the concept of the "mental change" and putting emphasize to the knowledge based reform of the economy management at regional level. These perceptions also are closely related to the previous project of Education Research Laboratory / EGO-CreaNET in Florence, namely that of the special attention of the regional networking within the ERA-Net space.

Taking into account Plovdiv itself has very high academic potential (apart from Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendraski" there are also universities of economy management, agriculture, food processing, medical academy and musical academy). The regional economic potential is rather high and in competition basis comparing with the capital. However, in view of economic concentration as in all countries in transition, geographically Plovdiv lies very close to the capital Sofia and the infrastructure connections are on good position. Moreover, traditionally the connections with the academic, public and NGO structures are excellent which would in fact facilitate constitution of rather more homogenous National Interest Group.

Some of the projects are specifically centred on problems of urban communities during time of transition which is taking place in the country and the whole region. Plovdiv University has excellent links with the local community of the city with a set of joint actions with the Municipality and local NGO`s. It also has good links with other universities of Bulgaria both public and private. It has good connections with other universities in the Balkans and Central-Southeast Europe and some others in Western Europe.

Plovdiv University may play important role in the joint action targeting cultural diversity and the education process closely linked with the preservation of the deep historical roots of the community. Supported by the long standing historical legacy both the Plovdiv University and its surrounding local community are representing very dynamic environment for the social and cultural development. Plovdiv also is a multiethnic city with several minorities living there from centuries. It has been an example of good interethnic relationships through the ages. Recently good perspectives were opened for a joint inter-border collaboration with the neighboring academic institutions of Turkey and Greece. Negotiations for developing courses in European Studies with certain Balkan focus are under advanced path.

Summarizing, above mentioned project of the Education Research Laboratory / EGO-CreaNET focuses on the most fundamental approach not only to the EU member states but also to the candidate countries. In a whole Eastern Europe still possess very high intellectual potential but lacks the economic means and adequate infrastructure. This could be solved by better coordination on a national but also on a regional level. Building coherent network or regions which would interrelate with more feasibility when such innovative approach is implied could be the best solution. Plovdiv university with its potential would be diligently support all activities within the proposed framework, namely a) providing efficient knowledge sharing between RTD and SME structures; b) elaborating knowledge based management of the human resources in order to gradually solve the problems of unemployment and skills quality status; c) these aims would be enabled by seeking mutual interests an invention of efficient linkage to the SME sector and the market requirements; d) finally, the overall result to achieve should be constitution of new pattern of eGovernment in the civic and corporate local management of the economic and intellectual resources. There are excellent opportunities to go far beyond local level into building efficient NIG with other correlated institutions and partners.

Signed:

On behalf of the Plovdiv University
Assoc.Prof. Valentin P.Petroussenko, Ph.D.
Jean Monnet Lecturer
European Documentation Centre Academic Supervisor
NCP for the ERA-Net
petrus@pu.acad.bg

City of Plovdiv, Bulgaria
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