



FINAC

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Matej Bel University, Banska Bystrica
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Newsletter

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THE THIRD PROJECT STUDY VISIT AT MATEJ BEL UNIVERSITY, BANSKA BYSTRICA

The third FINAC study visit was hosted by project partner Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia, from 3th to 7th December, 2017. The first day of the visit was opened with the welcome note by the Dean of Faculty of Economics, MBU, doc. Ing. Peter Krištofik, PhD. He wished the pleasant stay to the participants and pointed out the benefits of being a consortia member of the project FINAC and encouraged the participants to use the advantage of networking and further deepening of professional relations on both individual and institutional level.



Project leader for MBU, Maria Murray Svidronova, PhD. welcomed the participants to MBU and provided a short insight into the study visit organization details. Project coordinator, Sladjana Benković, expressed her gratitude to the hosts from MBU and wished a pleasant and productive stay to the participants. She presented the project's most important activities and results in the last three months.



Doc. Katarina Staronova, PhD. from Institute of Public Policy, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University held the lecture on management of civil service reform in Central Europe. The lecture gave a deeper insight into civil servants' performance appraisal and performance measurement on individual level. She introduced the audience to latest findings in performance appraisal failures, stressing out the importance of special relations between managers and employees in organizations. The participants have been familiarized with the results of Performance Appraisal Survey in EU countries and Norway, Serbia and Switzerland. The presentation was concluded with recommendations for proper implementation of accountability mechanisms and statistical analysis of current situation in abovementioned countries. Doc. Staronova pointed out that one of the main challenges in the performance appraisal is its quality and openness so that both civil servants and managers truly believe in the benefits that the PA system can bring.

The participants had an opportunity to hear the lecture by NISPA CEE president, Prof. Juraj Nemec from Matej Bel University and Masaryk University on evaluation of public administration reforms in Central and Eastern Europe EU member states, who presented and explained the latest data about this hot topic for both practitioners and researchers. Prof. Nemec presented the most important characteristics of EU public administrations and key results of EUPACK project. His vivid lecture showed quantitative evidence on current state of public administration reforms in EU countries, focusing on topics such as size, scope and structure of government, civil service system, societal context of public administration and government capacity and performance.



The second working day of this study visit began with presentation of Jozef Petraš, member of the Group of Experts in UN for Anti-corruption Measures in Public Administration. As an advisor in international organizations such as UNDP, OSCE, Committee of the Regions EU, CIVEX, Transparency International, Toward Transparency Vietnam, IRI and OSCAC, Mr. Petraš talked about active participation and citizen engagement in good governance.

Ing. Marian Holubek held presentation on his experience in project management in public service that he gained managing project in programmes like MUNSEFF (Municipal Sustainable Energy Finance Facility) SERPENTE (Surpassing Energy Target through Efficient Public Buildings), PERMANENT (Performance Risk Management for Energy Efficient Projects through Training). Mr. Holubek contributed to the third study visit with his extensive experience in managing projects in public sectors. He introduced the audience to very interesting and specific case studies and shared valuable advices and recommendations how to face and solve the most common issues in project management in public services.



Miroslav Šimkovič, president of non-governmental organization Via Altera talked about participatory budgeting as a tool for effective public service provision. Mr. Šimkovič briefly described the meaning and importance of public participation as engagement by the citizens in public decision making. He stressed out that participatory budgeting allows citizens to identify, discuss, and prioritize public spending projects. Later on he presented his own experience in participatory budgeting in Banska Bystrica. The participants found this case study presentation very valuable, since it offered them the insight in practical step-by-step application of participatory budgeting in one municipality. In the evening hosts from Matej Bel University organized a dinner event for all project participants accompanied by performance of University artistic ensemble Mladost.



During the last day, representatives of partner institutions had an opportunity to learn more about research on social innovations and solidarity acts in presentation of Doc. ing Maria Murray Svidronova. She talked about project LIPSE (Learning from Innovation in Public Sector Environments). This project was funded by the EU's FP7 framework and identifies drivers and barriers to successful social innovation in the public sector in 11 EU countries. Through presentation of this project, the participants found more about social innovation as a tool for shaping the public service following the needs of its consumers – citizens.



Doc. Svidronova also presented project SOLIDUS (Solidarity in European societies: empowerment, social justice and citizenship) funded by Horizon 2020 call “European societies after the crisis“. The project has brought positive change into lives of many participants by increasing their financial literacy. The participants from various communities (including marginalized and risk groups, e.g. seniors, orphans, Roma) learnt how to make better decisions about their finance which help them to prevent indebtedness. This session brought new impact on knowledge sharing and exchange of experiences among participants.



Project coordinator Sladjana Benković introduce the participants to the key steps in the next three months of FINAC project implementation. At the end of the third project Study visit at Matej Bel University, all partners have expressed great satisfaction with organization and content of the study visit. It was concluded that project activities have to keep such a high level and quality presented during three study visits so far.

INTERVIEWS WITH LECTURERS



Prof. ing. Juraj Nemec, CSC.

Matej Bel University, Slovakia and Masaryk University, Czech Republic, NISPA CEE president.

Professor Juraj Nemec presented Evaluation of public administration in Central and Eastern Europe.

How would you describe the development of the modern public sector?

Globally, the success of a successful public sector should have a desire for change, focused on, and respecting local capacities, focused on people who understand the system and problems and have a will for learning. There are such people in all countries. Public sector positions are sometimes more or less attractive, and earnings certainly constitute a motivation factor, but not everything can be divided into black and white.

It is okay to do a comparison with the private sector, but it is necessary to take into account all the factors. Sometimes the financial motivation becomes crucial.

Experience from Slovakia – how you have changed public administration system in Slovakia, and how long it has lasted?

It is necessary to learn from good practice from abroad, and certainly good experiences apply in your country. Slovakia is 14 years old in the European Union. The process in the public sector began with a transformation of the structure. Certainly, there is a long-term process, where the generation of shifts occurs. Certainly, it is a happy fact that new people come up with new ideas (brain rain).

I would suggest to young people to invest in their own education. To attend universities in the western countries and return to their countries. I would welcome the development of the private sector, and it is necessary to help young people understand the system, and encourage them in this undertaking. The result can be good public private partnerships.



Doc. Katarína Staronová, PhD.

Institute of Public Policy,
Faculty of social and economic sciences, Comenius University

Main topic of doc. Staronova was Management of Civil Service Reform in Central Europe.

How the public administration in Slovakia has improved over the last twenty years and scientific research?

It can be said that at some point this process was proceeding with slow co-ordination and without a clear strategy. It is also difficult to carry out the research, since sometimes the basic data was not available to us either. Civil service law focuses to statistics, data gathering. Three, four years ago started a participatory budgeting system, which is a positive change. It is necessary that researchers and employees in academic institutions be members of the ministry.

Which would be a suggestion for countries that are in the process of standardizing the public administration system?

It is necessary to make an exceptionally good substitution of the career development system, a system of clear positions of responsibility and responsibility. Order is easier to get in if it's a small system.



Jozef Petráš

Member of the Group of Experts established by the UN in the field of Anti-Corruption Measures in Public Administration. Advisor in international organizations UNDP, OSCE, Committee of the Regions EU, CIVEX, Transparency International, Toward Transparency Vietnam, IRI, OSCAC.

According to your experience and successful work in projects, how could the power of corruption be reduced?

Everything is in good organization, and the responsibility of the team of experts leading the political party is very important. They should agree in the assertion that the entire process will be open. openness of the process establishes the system. Unfortunately, there are too many ways to hide too much information, and therefore it often seems that the story of corruption becomes never ending. Always every new election brings with it a story of transparency. They need knowledge and skills to re-examine the system.

A good example is provided by the Nordic countries, but it is very difficult to compare. They do not really have a desire for corruption. The question arises as to how this phenomenon could come to life in other parts. It is necessary to find a way to fix something. A significant example is bribes in hospitals. This may be attributed to the fate inherited from the communist era.

What about the new generation?

Everything we think will lead to improvement, we should try to implement, and we must not give up in attempts. The controlling process should also be transparent, where a clear framework would be prescribed. I try to get to every detail and publish the outcome.

Communists also used controlling. There was a question of theft from the Communist Party. But even though something like that happened, the public interest was always taken care of. The point is to protect the public rather than the interests of someone.



Ing. Marián Holúbek

Project manager in programmes like MUNSEFF Municipal Sustainable Energy Finance Facility, SERPENTE Surpassing Energy Targets through Efficient Public Buildings, PERMANENT Performance Risk Management for Energy Efficient Project Through Training and many more.

What are your experiences and suggestions for developing energy efficiency in other countries?

Many developing countries have great potential for developing energy efficiency, for example, such as Serbia. Different institutions could establish it in the market. Price of electricity is lower, everything could be cheaper. Markets like this can gain 10 millions of Euro per year. There is structural trading problem. Subsidiaries structure finding available for the plan is one of the important elements. Political influence can make the problem. A positive element is how privileges can be obtained for investment projects.

Which are most often problems in the implementation of projects?

Strong legislation, minimal results in implementation of projects. Legislation in many occasions can be very chaotic. Sometimes taxes create problems and the cost-effectiveness of projects can be called into question. also, a high level of bureaucracy.



Miroslav Šimkovič

President of Non-Governmental Organization Via Altera

Participatory budgeting, how did it happen?

Actual member of one NGO learned about participatory budgeting in 2011 in Bratislava. We met people from Bratislava who shared experience from French, English people. We liked idea very much, and actually we asked people from Bratislava, whether they be willing to help us. They were very cooperative, they organised workshops, we invited people. Our official start was in 2013 I think that we were lucky. In October or November 2013, we were proud to organize workshop where presentation had one lady from Poland (member of parliament), who was guest at the University Matej Bela. She taught us a lot and offered to help. In December 2013, we were preparing Statute for participatory budgeting in Banska Bystrica. Some people were very helpful in that process. One lawyer helped us for creating the Statute. We submitted to the mayor of the city, and he agreed with the whole idea. At the end of 2013 we organized the 1st public discussion. We have invited everybody to come. In February 2014, we arrange second discussion forum – there was a voting for 31 projects, and the total amount was 5.000 euro. The most difficult part was to persuade politicians to accept that, but we have positive examples. Project „Summer Culture for the people“ in 2014. Was very nice example for cooperation. They joint together active so many people. The same was in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Please explain the process from discussion forum to voting.

Citizens 15-year-old and older can give their vote. A period of 15 working days is available – from Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. till 4 p.m. After that period, we count the votes. Each person can vote for maximum 4 projects from the list. In 2014, we had 31 projects on the list, in 2017 less, 17 projects. Each year won projects which are connected with playgrounds for children, sports. Than ecological, improve greener in the city, public spaces, benches in the park.

I miss among this project proposal that would be improved life of homeless people. Very small number of projects is also connected with the live of old people. Old people are very thankful and they actively participate in the project selection process.



Doc. Maria Murray Svidronova, PhD.

Project leader, MBU

What is your opinion after the realization of the visit to the Matej Bel University?

Basically, I am happy that our participants of the project got new information. Very important is to share the knowledge that we have. It was very challenging, because it is Christmas time, organization of lecturers was very heavy, also weather conditions. I am proud that according to agenda we had good lecturers and I am satisfied with selection.

Gala dinner was rather special. You really add value to the project visit.

Leader of Folklore group, Martin Urban, pleasantly surprised with programme of Christmas songs inspired of culture of Slovakia, dancing, singing, traditional food, which was extra step. We have Faculty of Arts within the University, and also teacher of violin presented his virtuosity.

Martin Urban teaches and leads folklore group and travel all around to present songs and dance from Slovakia. I was very happy that 14 people from the group was willing to come.



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