

CATALYST Capacity Building in the Field of Higher Education (CBHE):

Report on Meeting of Management Board 19 – 21 November 2018

LIMERICK Institute of Technology, Ireland (LIT)

Run by LIT

In the opening of the proceedings (Monday, 19 November) speakers overviewed the agenda highlights of each daily meeting, the current topical issues as well as the results of the UK training session in the previous week. The topical issues invoked by the project Coordinator, **Ms Elisabeth Lazarou**, covered the need for a realistic and commonly decided action plan and the preparations for the 1st National Awareness Day (NAD) in Vietnam and Laos against the backdrop of an enhanced awareness of the relevance of the Catalyst project in promoting the values of humanistic education in the digital age.



The venue for the first day of the Board Meeting was at the Institute of Art and Design which was also the location of a very interesting design exhibition and artwork shopping centre.

The other opening speakers dealt with some critical agenda items such as the assessment techniques in vocational techniques (scheduled for Tuesday, 20th of November by **Mr. Kirby**) and the kind of problems that invite further decision making and work such as: management and dissemination problems, how to work forward, making modules sustainable, arrangements regarding the National Awareness Days and Final Conference (**Mr. Cavanagh**). As far as the administrative side was concerned, discussions focused on the equipment acquisition tendering procedure, which will be organized by HUST(Vietnam) as a new 3rd coordinator. Improvement plans envisaged making room for more training mobilities. The opening

session ended with Power Point presentations made by all eight Vietnam and Laos partners with respect to work done or in the planning stage and discussions as a follow-up.

The Monday afternoon was devoted to a documentary trip to the Library and Campus of the Limerick University. All participants were impressed by the attention given to humanize the reading space (areas to individuals with special needs) and to ensuring opportunities for group interaction.



View of the LIBRARY of the UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK

The second day's provided a fresh reminder of the project background VALUES, the Work Packages in general, and the DISSEMINATION Work Package in particular (morning) involving NADs (National Awareness Days) then moved to MODULES related work (afternoon). **Elisabeth Lazarou** opened the proceedings with a *Brief History of the University POLITEHNICA of Bucharest (UPB)*, a 200-year-old institution, and the Faculty of Engineering in Foreign languages (FILS). She also dealt with the current educational background created by the process of implementing the Bologna provisions, both from the viewpoint of procedures (ECTS) and values (interaction, individual work, employability, autonomy, creativity, problem solving, no learning of facts, empowering students, giving them opportunities to team work). Her speech raised the issue of how far change has been implemented in the Romanian environment or else, how fast it can be implemented. Discussions emphasized the fact that change may go in parallel to traditional methods, that stability should be preserved although a little push is a realistic move. The existing situation features small islands of change that have to be connected. The agreement has been that change is obligatory because the environment is changing: the digital culture has become a way of life for the millennials while for the older generation it is an adventure. That is why learning should become a two way process: *“My students are my teachers”* stated Ms Lazarou in support of the

idea that teachers have to sync in with their students' way of thinking. This process, she claimed, might be a step by step process, one step forward, 2 steps back.

Ms Lazarou further overviewed the main goals of the Work Packages (i.e. preparation, piloting, piloting evaluation, dissemination, and management), endorsed some relevant deadlines (February 2019 for Pilot 2 and May 2019 for Pilot 3) and suggested the design of an observation plan.

In the second part of the morning session, **Mr. Kirby** addressed some specific issues to be tackled by the CATALYST Dissemination Strategy such as: the need to enlarge the target audience; capitalizing on NADs in order to target project outsiders who should thus get a clear insight of the project work through careful explanations. Consequently, participants were further requested to provide names of organizations active in the educational field and a list of possible target groups was drawn up including: library associations, ministries, wider university staff, NGOs, ERASMUS office (where existing).

The second part of the Tuesday morning session was further assigned to arrangements concerning the National Awareness Day (NAD) from the viewpoint of agenda, timeline, and budget. Consequently, participants worked in groups over the NAD agendas and time schedule.

The Budget arrangements and constraints per day for the 1st NAD were decided and confirmed by the Coordinator.

The first part of the Tuesday afternoon session was devoted to both urgent FINANCIAL (second installment pre-requisites) and SUSTAINABILITY related issues. The second part of the Tuesday afternoon session focused on the CORE CURRICULA MODULES i.e. review and discussion of Implementation of CATALYST Curriculum modules and the piloting up to date. **Ms Clare Woolhouse** and **David Allan (EHU)** and **Gerard Cullen (TUD)** were in charge of delivering an overview of the findings.

In the wake of these findings important issues were raised such as the need for extending the project deadline on account of its complexity and the budgetary constraints triggered by the fact that budgeted travelling time cannot be longer than 1 day for arrival and 1 day for departure because of unit costs. In the last part of the afternoon session **Mr. Kirby** brought in some welcome assessment templates used for apprentice candidates.

Elisabeth Lazarou wrapped up the afternoon session with an invitation extended to project members to participate in eLSE (*eLearning and software for education*), a scientific event organized at the UPB, Romania on April 11th - 12th 2019. Mention was made that participation is peer reviewed and ISI indexed.

The 3rd day of the Board meeting (**Wednesday, 21 NOVEMBER**) was dedicated to practical matters, an overview of the Work Package provisions (morning) and further work on Module wrapping (afternoon). Ms Elisabeth Lazarou brought clarifications and emphasized key points in a wide range of topics of immediate or long term concern such as: second installment requirements (travel reports,

financial statements), work packages (WP), CATALYST website, WP outcomes, work plan year 3, deadlines.

Here are some of the points made during the WP discussions: difficulty of Module 1 on account of its conceptual novelty, (i.e. *Communicative Approach*) which accounts for the justified request of project extension at the behest of the EU Steering Group and PC partners collectively in order to properly reach the project objectives and to give time to the PC partners to digest and integrate such a new curriculum. **(WP 1 PREPARATION)**; extra work needed to cover Module 12 *Introduction to Basic Vocational Writing Skills* (script and answer guide prepared by the Pyramid Group and TUD), regarding module description, lesson plans, and number of credits to be decided so as to fit local needs **(WP 2 DEVELOPMENT and WP 3 QUALITY PLAN)**; drawing up the list of potential stakeholders to be involved in the dissemination **(WP 4 DISSEMINATION)**; need of decision making over the hosting of the Final Project Conference and making room for another management meeting with partners next year in June 2019; need to improve the CATALYST managerial side with respect to: the work of steering group meetings which did not work as planned; updating the 3rd year plan.

Updating the Work plan for the 3rd year of CATALYST covered discussion of a wide range of issues that resulted in the following decisions: providing input for years 1 and 2 on each online platform unit by the end of December (2018); setting NADs dates; preparing the background and starting the integration of the modules in the curricula as the process needs “time and patience” **(Ms Lazarou)**; combining NADs with 2nd and 3rd piloting observations in Laos and in Vietnam in order to cut on observer expenses; setting up another Steering Group meeting (1 Coordinator from every PC) to take place in June 2019 in Berlin and Dresden (covering 5 days: 2 days Berlin, 1 day Dresden plus 2 travel days).

All in all, the meeting provided useful clarifications and made room for constructive decisions.