

E-LEARNING AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES IN CONDITIONS OF ESF ASSISTANCE

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Abstract: The article is dedicated to substance of projects and project intentions of EU aiming to the development of programme information processing system. We describe the range of support of the e-learning education, and also an implementation of new information and communication technologies in practice.

1 Introduction

The quality of educational system in all countries is closely related to the economical efficiency.

All developed countries monitor the efficiency of their educational system and educational results in whole, including a handicapped people, coming from socially disadvantaged background etc. Every country develops its own specific programmes to provide the most effective education with the aim to include them into the working process and society.

Informatization of the Society

The progress in new ICT development (information and communication technologies) is reflecting in new applications, which are using this knowledge for development and management of innovative educational or economical processes with a growing rate.

The economic system of Slovak Republic is at the point of solving problems of a strategic meaning. After transformational steps from a directly regulated economy to the market economy we now expect its technological structure transformation. Natural element of this development has to be progressive informatics and communication technologies. Thanks to their use, the information volume can be multiplied, the intellectual and innovative capacities are being activated and its efficiency to the benefit of the society development is increased. This way a new social-economical phenomenon known as **Society informatization process** is created.

The informatization of the society process research and progress should follow the national science and technology policy – namely in the way of management and decision making, organizational, legislative and finance provision, support of research and development projects involved in international cooperation etc. It should set the priorities of a basic and applicational research, which should not only be the source of ideas and innovations for informatics and knowledge industry, but also needful precondition for effective and reliable use of ICT in the informatization of the society process.

Under the research and progress in the informatization of the society field is essential to focus on these priorities:

- effective use of the ICT resources (speed, reliability, distributiveness of resources and information, effective manipulation, communication and data saving),
- safe use of the ICT resources (safe communication, safe information manipulation and saving, application of tools for e-education, e-trade, and furthermore e-government),
- accessibility of the ICT resources (user interfaces for various ICT users categories)
- education efficiency (research of pedagogical methods, that use the potential of ICT to improve all types of educational processes),
- creating a trust in ICT

A research, which would lead to a better ICT acceptance in the society, to increase of the trust in their application and possible positive and negative impacts on the society examination, should be supported in the social sciences field.

In the context of informatics society support, including science and new ICT technologies implementation and application research, the European Parliament and the Council no. 1720/2006 established following action plans:

- long-term program for effective integration of ICT into the systems of education and expert preparation in Europe (**program eLearning**),
- action plan of the Committee for support of organizations acting of European level, also specific activities in education and instruction field,
- program for academic education improvement and support of understanding between cultures through cooperation with third countries (Erasmus Mundus) (2004 to 2008),
- second phase of the Committee for expert education “Leonardo da Vinci”
- strategic goal for the European Union to become the most competitive and the most dynamic knowledge economy in the world, being able to ensure sustainable economic growth and increase of quality and quantity of job possibilities, social cohesiveness. The Council for education was invited to consider from a general point of view concrete future goals of the systems of education with emphasis on common interests, priorities national variety.

European Parliament and the Council have set the budget resources even for a number of qualified goals of enlarged Union 2007-2013, which should contribute to a more effective achieving of a new generation of the Committee programs in education and expert preparation field. Furthermore, general orders for European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and Cohesive Fund were set, followed by framework for actions of structural funds and Cohesive Fund and goals, principles and rules of program elaboration, evaluation and management of each field’s assistance scale.

2 Structural Funds

Since the entry of the Slovak Republic to the EU has our nation the right to use EU’s financial tools to support development projects, with the assistance of which the regional policy of the state is also applied. These tools are the Structural Funds of the EU and ESF is one of them.

Concerning Structural Funds the fulfilment of three objectives is set:

Objective 1 supports the development and structural changes of regions, whose development is slower. Regions included in this objective have their GNP lower than 75% of Committee’s average.

Objective 2 supports economic and social conversion of regions facing structural problems. These are areas dealing with social-economic changes of industry and services, declining rural regions, urban zones in difficulties, and fishery-dependent areas in crisis.

Objective 3 supports adjusting and modernization of policies and educational, instructional and employment systems. It provides the regions with financial aid, except for those mentioned in Objective 1 and gives a political framework for all arrangements needed to support domestic human resources without affecting specific characteristics of the region.

Structural Funds include:

- **European Social Fund**
- **European Regional Development Fund**
- **Financial Instruments for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG)**
- **European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)**

Following program documents for each Structural Fund were approved for the shortened period from 2004 to 2006 in Slovak Republic:

- Operational program “Basic Infrastructure”
- Sector operational program “Industry and Services”
- Sector operational program “Human Resources”
- Sector operational program “Agriculture and Rural Development”
- Cohesive program document “NUTS II Bratislava Region Objective 2”
- Cohesive program document “NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3”
- Initiative of the EQUAL Committee
- Initiative InterReg III A
- Initiative InterReg III B

Every program document contained concrete objectives, overall description of arrangements planned to carry out priorities, orientational financial plan and others.

3 European Social Fund

European Social Fund is European financial tool supporting and supplementing activities of the Member States focused on development of labour market and human resources mainly in context of new active policies and of system for battle against unemployment. It supports activities developing human potential, helps to raise qualification, supports work integration of young people and persons getting back to the labour market and helps to create new job opportunities, mostly for various citizen classes. It will participate on financing of two operational programs in the program period 2007-2013:

- Operational program „Employment and Social Inclusion (OP EaSI) - directory institution is Slovak Ministry of Social Issues and Family
- Operational program “Education” - directory institution is Slovak Ministry of Education, which should focus on promoting and improving of expert preparation, education and counselling as a part of Lifelong Education Policy, also on support of qualified, educated and flexible labour force under the terms of development of human potential in research, science and technique.

Under the terms of human resources and education the ESF will be **creating integrational environment for electronic services in the educational field (eLearning)**, also increasing their accessibility, in program period 2007-2013. Indirectly it will support modernisation of education by increasing the accessibility of broadband connection of households, which can use it as a technological platform to use electronic services in education, developed under the Operational Program “Education”. Concerning the evaluation of eLearning programs it will support these two types:

- 1 **valorising** - analysis of the results and experiences, comparative analysis and spreading of given acknowledgements and experiences;
- 2 **network** - basic service essential for spreading and using of results in the highest scale possible

The eLearning project grant can be still applied by:

- colleges and universities
- state and public administration
- non-profit organisations
- private firms
- another legal entities

Project cooperation-capable states:

- Member States of the EU
- Norway, Island, Lichtenstein
- Bulgaria

Main objectives of eLearning project support are:

- awareness about ways of eLearning usage and contribution to development of informatics skills of citizens, also strengthening of intercultural dialogue;
- development of eLearning potential in European educational dimension development field
- creation of mechanism to support quality of European products and services, also transfer of good experiences;
- development of eLearning potential in context of innovative methods of education with concern in implementing quality into the process of education and strengthening of student’s autonomy

Main fields of supported activities:

- Support of computer and informatics skills;
- European virtual universities;
- eTwinning - support of partnership cooperation elementary, high and academic schools in Europe, also a support of education of teachers;
- supplemental activities for support eLearning in Europe

Supported forms of eLearning:

- **On-line learning** - Experience with learning or educational environment, which depends on the internet/www as a primary communicational and presentational mean,
- **Blended learning** - It is used in wide scale of branches for the needs of training and education. This conception has many definitions, one of the most used defines *blended learning* as a *combination of using ICT together with traditional learning face to face*,

- **ODL** (Open and Distance Learning) - opportunity for distant learning, out of classroom, with high level autonomy, with help of various systems,
- **TEL** (Technology Enhanced Learning) - learning supported by technologies,
- **CSCL** (Computer Supported Collaborative Learning) - objective of CSCL is to support students in effective in joint learning.

Conclusion

European Union is taking steps to support the knowledge technologies of eLearning field in the highest scale possible and to accelerate extension and application of achieved results into common research of united candidate countries. The support, and of course the realization mentioned support programs itself, should allow us to increase the total social impact of research results in the field of expert technologies, human resources, it also enables full usage of educational potential of used intelligent technologies, web integration and hi-end mobile technologies into daily life.

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