

REPORT
on
THE SHARING EXPERIENCE TRAINING VISIT IN USA
August 27 – September 06, 2004

Background:	
Project:	<i>ICTWAY 2003</i> – “ICT”: A Way to Improve the Skills of Young Entrepreneurs
Project partners:	CDIMM Foundation “Maramures” Baia Mare, Technology Innovation Group (TIG) Austin, Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research Funding (UEFISCSU) Bucharest, BIIC Harghita Miercurea Ciuc, Center for Business Excellence (CBE) from University “Politehnica” of Bucharest
Activity:	Develop the training program (under Project Objective No.3)
Sub-activity:	Sharing experience with US similar organisations (ii)
Visiting team	Cezar Scarlat (CBE Bucharest), Bogdan Brustureanu (UEFISCSU Bucharest), Eugen Scarlat (CBE Bucharest). The team and visit period were jointly established by the CBE and UEFISCSU Project managers, and approved by the Project General manager. The legal procedures to obtain the USA visa were completed by all participants.
Place:	Austin, Texas, USA
Accommodation:	Hawthorn Hotel, Tallwood, Austin
Period:	August 27 – September 07, 2004. The Romanian team left Bucharest, Romania on August 27 th and arrived in Austin, Texas, USA same day (via Paris). The team left Austin on September 6 th and arrived in Bucharest the following day (September 7 th) via Paris. The local travel (Austin area) was facilitated by renting a car (Enterprise Company).
Date:	Report completed on September 10, 2004

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Objective:

This activity completes the first sharing experience visit performed by the first Romanian group of eight staff members and trainers (six representing CDIMM Maramures and two representing BIIC Harghita), between October 18 and November 2, 2003.

The overall objective of the training visit was to make the members of the visiting team *able to better assist SMEs in order to develop and integrate ICT solutions into their operations so they can become more effective and competitive.*

This current visit was jointly organised by TIG and CBE. A great deal of support was offered by the TIG representative, Dr. Norman Kaderlan, who prepared the visit agenda, as well.

Training visit agenda:

In spite of its shortness, the sharing experience activity was excellently organized by the TIG representative. The visit agenda was focussed on the main subjects of the *ICTWAY 2003 Project*, as follows:

Date	Place	Action	Contact
Friday, August 27	Austin International Airport	About 21.00: Arriving in Austin, TX	Dr. Norman Kaderlan, Technology Innovation Group
Saturday, August 28	Hawthorn Hotel	10.00: Briefing on visit objectives and logistics	Dr. Norman Kaderlan
	“Enterprise” Company	16.00: Solving logistic problems – rent the car	Dr. Norman Kaderlan
	TIG headquarters	19.00: Business Dinner	Dr. Norman Kaderlan
Monday, August 30	Hawthorn Hotel	11.00: Briefing on visit meetings and activities	Dr. Norman Kaderlan
Tuesday, August 31	University of Texas in Austin – CBA 6.420	14.00: Meeting on MOOT Corp® Business Plan International Competition	Dr. Gary Cadenhead, MOOT Corp® Director State Department Group
	University of Texas in Austin – Welch Hall, 2.304	15.00-18.00: Attending the graduate course “The Enterprise of Technology” (Photo 2)	Prof. Steve Nichols Dr. Norman Kaderlan Dr. Neil Iscoe, Director of the Office of Technology Commercialization, University of Texas

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Wednesday, September 1	Iron Cactus	12.00: Business Lunch – Technology commercialisation issues	Prof. Steve Nichols, Assoc. VP for Research, University of Texas Dr. Norman Kaderlan
	IC ² Institute - ATI MCC Building	14.00-17.00: Visit to Austin Technology Incubator (ATI) – Photo 3	Dr. Joel Wiggins, ATI Director
Thursday, September 2	Clickin Research, Inc.	10.00: Visit to Clickin Research, Inc.	Dr. Martha Russel, CEO Ms. Lila Valencia, Director of Research, Clickin Research, Inc.
	University of Texas in Austin – McCombs School of Business – CBA 5.124H	13.00-14.00: Meeting with Mr. John Doggett, Lecturer in Entrepreneurship (Photo 4)	Mr. John Doggett, Director of Entrepreneurship Programs
	University of Texas in Austin – McCombs School of Business – CBA 3.130	14.00-18.00: Attending the MBA course on “Global Strategy”	Mr. John Doggett, Senior Lecturer
Saturday, September 4	Trip to San Antonio	Visited “The Alamo” – Texas heritage museum	Romanian visiting team
	Salt Lick Three	19.00: Business dinner – In-team debriefing session on achieving visit objectives	Romanian visiting team
Sunday, September 5	Mr. Kirkhoff's Residence	PM: Meeting and Business Dinner – IT projects in university life	Mr. James Kirkhoff, Assistant Dean for Information Technology, College of Fine Arts, The University of Texas at Austin Dr. Norman Kaderlan
Monday, September 6	Manuel's Great Hills	13.00: Business lunch – Sharing visit conclusions between Project partners	Dr. Norman Kaderlan Mr. Sid Burbach, Associate Director, IC ² Institute at University of Texas at Austin
	Austin International Airport	About 17.00: Departure from Austin, TX	Dr. Norman Kaderlan
<p>The programme organized by TIG was a combination of site visits to the main organisations that are working in ICT, research and development, as well as training sessions and meetings with companies' representatives.</p>			

A short description of the most significant visited sites is presented below.

Clickin Research, Inc. provides actionable market intelligence through internet-based market research technology. Their research has helped clients launch new brands, determine market size of new ventures, and determine customer satisfaction with a product or service offering.

Austin Technology Incubator advises early-stage, high-risk companies and provides the necessary assistance to make their technology-based ventures succeed. It is considered one of the premiere technology incubators in the world.

“The MOOT CORP® Competition” counts 21 years of fostering entrepreneurship. The idea to have a business plan competition was conceived back in 1983. In these 21 years, the Competition has grown from an intellectual exercise for Texas MBAs to a launch pad for MBA ventures from around the globe. MOOT CORP 2004 offers additional prizes, new events, greater opportunities to develop skills in soliciting funds and more exposure to potential investors.

“Global Strategy” is a MBA course at UTA’s McCombs School of Business that brings together students from different countries and cultures. Case study method is extensively used.

“The Enterprise of Technology: From Mind to Market” is a graduate course at The University of Texas at Austin that brings together students from the College of Engineering, College of Natural Sciences, College of Pharmacy, College of Law, and Graduate School of Business to explore the commercialization technology. Students prepare team projects and deliver presentations accordingly.

Conclusions & Lessons learnt:

- The visit to the Austin Technology Incubator allowed understanding the overall framework of activity within the institution; the process of admission to the incubator for a firm; the tracking procedures in order to assess the level of performance and progress made by the incubated firms. The discussions offered a better understanding of the services offered by the incubator and we were able to set eyes on the facilities.
- The meeting at the Clickin Research Inc. has revealed the point of view of a firm that has refused the admission to the incubator because of several reasons (rent level, apparently bureaucratic procedures, less interest for the management services offered by the incubator). The firm’s management team had enough knowledge to develop the firm without outside support.
- The two types of university business courses attended (MBA and graduate) had in common the diversity of people attending these courses. The MBA course reunited people with very different backgrounds and experiences, coming from different countries. The graduate course “The Enterprise of Technology” put together graduate students coming from business, engineering, pharmacy, music etc. There was strength in diversity and not weakness because the students are able to learn

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from each other experience. In fact, putting together people with different backgrounds is a must for university courses.

- The direct contacts with entrepreneurs, faculties, and managers revealed “the American” business culture and way of thinking. The entrepreneurial mentality states that bankruptcy (genuine, not through fraud) is not really about failure, but rather a way to learn from mistakes and be able to come back and do business more successfully.
- The higher education is very much practical oriented: the business plan contest conducted by Dr. Gary Cadenhead is part of the curriculum and plays an important role in the entrepreneurial formation of students.
- The university is funded using several sources; the private contributions are emphasized and recognized (professorships, scholarships).
- The model for business incubator funding includes various sources (in the periods of economic recession there is a far less number of firms that are bought by bigger companies or that are getting listed). The incubator is more successful as the number of firms which are graduating is greater.
- The organisations selected for visits and meetings are active in the most dynamic sectors: ICT, new technologies, R&D.
- There were explored co-operation possibilities, both with the current partners and the visited organisations.
- Even the duration of visit was short, it is worth to underline the effort and the activities performed by Norman Kaderlan to select the best organisations, make all meeting appointments in due time, help solving logistics, and ensure leisure activities and family visits – so the visiting team has been literally immersed in American culture and way of doing business.

Report prepared by the visiting team – led by Dr. Cezar SCARLAT, CBE Project manager