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## HEInnovate at the University of Ruse ?Angel Kanchev?

*HEInnovate is providing support for the University of Ruse ?Angel Kanchev? to reach its potential for itself, the region and Bulgaria.*

The University of Ruse ?Angel Kanchev? began using HEInnovate in 2014, after being invited to participate in the Bulgaria HEInnovate country review in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria and four other Bulgarian universities.

The use of HEInnovate at the university was driven by the Rector body, as a way to address both broad challenges in higher education in Bulgaria, and a number of specific goals for the university. The challenges facing higher education in Bulgaria included reducing public financing and changing economic demands for graduate employment. While enrolment rates in HEIs had been increasing, growth in the rates of graduate under- and un-employment were evident, and the links between the HEI and business sectors were thought to be underdeveloped. Among the specific goals of the university were to improve university-business collaboration, to improve the financial stability of the university, to address high expectations on the university from regional, national and international stakeholders, and to ensure the sustainable development of the region.

These goals meant that the HEInnovate project in Ruse was ambitious, including an assessment of the university?s management system, development of entrepreneurial thinking among staff, and seeking ways to improve education and research processes in light of the economic environment. This required a significant amount of preparation among faculty and management staff.

The HEInnovate project started with discussions between university management and the academic community around the need for transformation, and regular meetings with department managers to discuss the need for reforms that would answer the challenges. These individuals were then introduced to HEInnovate by email, and asked to complete the

online self-assessment ? either alone or in groups. The scope of the self-assessment exercise was significant, engaging many types of stakeholder within and outside of the university. The rector body, Academic Council, all heads of departments, and directors of the university?s laboratories were consulted, as well as businesses, local and national authorities, secondary schools, non-profit organisations and international project partners.

In May 2014, the results of the HEInnovate exercise were presented at a specially-convened workshop featuring representatives of the OECD, Bulgarian Ministry of Education, the broader academic community, representatives of companies, and the city?s public administration, including the Governor and Mayor. The workshop resulted in several achievements, including setting a clear direction for necessary reforms at the university, as well as modes of teaching. Since the workshop, a strategy document has been produced regarding the reforms, and the courses supported by the university?s e-learning platform have more than tripled, expanding the capacity to offer distance-learning opportunities. University-business collaboration has also improved, exemplified by successes in the Shell Eco-marathon, an annual international competition in which teams compete to build and test eco-cars ? a result of support to students from local firms.

The achievements of the HEInnovate project have been underpinned by the strong will of the Rector body to develop the leading role of the University of Ruse ?Angel Kanchev? in regional development, and a commitment to maintaining dialog between the university and its stakeholders. The HEInnovate project revealed the importance of proper internal regulations and fruitful dialog with relevant stakeholders in the implementation of an entrepreneurial university. As such, further organisational changes planned for the future include further financial decentralisation to encourage entrepreneurial activity among faculty, and further improvements to inter-faculty relations to achieve better academic results. The Rector body has intentions to organise a second large-scale HEInnovate self-assessment in 2019.

*This paper was prepared by Daniel Yordanov Pavlov, Associate Professor, PhD and Prof Velizara Pencheva, Faculty of "Business and Management" at the University of Ruse "Angel Kanchev" and edited by Martin Wain, Technopolis Group.*

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