

European integration – a challenge for Slovakia International Scientific Days 2004

Science and research represent an important academic activity of every university and faculty and are considered the major pillars of high quality education. One of the most successful scientific events having been traditionally organized by the Faculty of Economics and Management are the International Scientific Days.

The importance of this year International Conference was strengthened by the fact that it had been organized in the days 20–21st May 2004, just a few days after the Accession of Slovakia into the EU. The central topic of the International Scientific Days "European Integration – a Challenge for Slovakia" was stated in this spirit. The goal of the 7th year of the Conference was to provide the conference participants with a broad view of important areas regarding integration of Slovakia into European economic structures as well as with important information relating to the influence of agrarian policy and European structures upon the agrisector of Slovakia.

The conference participants were divided into 6 scientific sections aimed at the substantive topic of the conference:

1. Common Agricultural Policy of the EU and Slovak agriculture
2. Sustainable development and multifunctional agriculture
3. Enterprise in the European Union
4. Education in the 21st century
5. Information technologies
6. Young science

Two hundred and thirtyfour participants (scientists as well as practitioners) from Slovakia and from 9 foreign countries took part in the conference. The Faculty of Economics and Management made guests from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Austria, Ireland, Romania, Serbia, Japan and Germany welcome to its institution. The plenary session papers represented by the Slovak and foreign scientists provided highly valuable up-to-date information regarding the opportunities, benefits and importance, which have been offered by the EU to its member countries.

Next to the chair of the International Scientific Committee of the Conference, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak Agricultural University, Prof. Ing. P. Bielik, PhD, other speakers presented their papers. Ing. M. Maxon, chair of the Committee for Agriculture of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Doc. Ing. G. Blaas, CSc., director of the Research Institute of Economics of Agriculture and Food-processing Industry in Bratislava, Doc. Ing. M. Kadlečíková, CSc.,

FAO Subregional Representative for Central and Eastern Europe, Doc. Ing. T. Doucha, CSc., director of the Research Institute of Agricultural Economics in Prague, Dr.h.c. prof. Dr. J. Hanns Pichler, M.Sc. from the Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Prof. B. Riordan from the Rural Economy Research Centre in Dublin, Ireland, and Prof. M. Hofreither of the BOKU University in Vienna.

Presentations in the plenary part of the Conference were oriented to the mutual exchange of theoretical and practical knowledge and experiences regarding such questions as development of the common agrarian policy of the EU, sustainable development, multifunctional agriculture, success of enterprises under the EU economic conditions, information technologies and aspects of education management in the 21st century.

The papers of the "Common Agricultural Policy in the EU" section were primarily focused on the impact of the EU Common Agricultural Policy, selected problems of agriculture transformation in the Slovak Republic and in other accession countries, problems of direct payments and their influence on agricultural and food sectors, results of negotiation processes and their low share of realization and application, agrisector, customs union, the common EU market, international law, approximation problems in the EU, and many others.

The Section "Sustainable Development and Multifunctional Agriculture" stressed the fact that sustainable development of agriculture is a precondition for preserving, sustaining and renewing the nature and population, healthy nutrition, rational use of natural resources and other activities oriented to countryside improvement. Through the accession in the EU, the problem of sustainable development has become more important especially in terms of more responsible fulfillment of environmental and ecological requirements. Under the conditions of the Slovak agriculture, it has come to important structural changes, which have been adjusting to the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU. It mostly concerns the transformation processes, changes in organization forms of land farming and processing the agricultural raw materials, changes in ownership relations regarding soil, changes in the foreign agrarian trade, etc. It has been a complicated process to change the character of the present enterprises. In order to overcome enterprises' self-preservation, managers have to orient their activities to multifunctional ones in real time and real place.

Participants of the Section "Enterprise in the European Union" focused on revealing the problem connected with

hindering the adjusting process relating to demanding requirements of the EU market, which is the case in many enterprises, some of the presented papers pointed to the specific nature of agrarian and food markets. An effort to provide the agrarian reform tends to respect not only the producers' situations, but also to protect consumers' needs and wishes. A plenty of rights and duties, which originated from the new European laws in the field of health and environment protection, will result in increasing the production costs. Integration of Slovakia into the EU will undoubtedly have a positive influence. If individual enterprises are successful or not will depend on their ability to fulfill the criteria of the EU, the ability to use a challenge offered by the EU market as well as the ability to use additional sources. A criterion on which a judgment of enterprises' successfulness is based corresponds with their transformation and structural changes.

Education aspects were dealt with in the Section "Education in the 21st century". Importance of education is very urgent at present, in the period, which is often called as the era of information explosion. Future and prosperity of a society depends first of all on education of people. The Conference participants discussed individual forms of education processes in the information society, e.g. ICT usage, content and form changes where much attention was paid to the distance education. They further discussed the topic of instructors' competence and their evaluation, pedagogical and psychological importance of instructors in the process of ICT implementation. Of much interest were the papers dealing with the process of acquiring the specific foreign language competence by managers.

The papers presented in the Section "Information technologies" were oriented at using new information and communication technologies in practice. It was stressed that information and information technologies are typical for our present society, which has entered the Information Society. Managers and economists who want to prosper nowadays cannot build the information strategy of their enterprises without using the informa-

tion and communication technologies. One part of them uses Internet services, mobile communication, wireless technologies, etc. in such a way that they are able to ensure the prosperity and competitiveness of their enterprises. Other needs and possibilities of how to use the new information and communication technologies and Internet services, especially under the conditions of agricultural primary production enterprises, were outlined at the end of the Conference.

Their participating and presenting selected topics in the Section "Young Science" declared the interest of young scientists and doctoral students in current problems research. The papers solved a broad spectrum of problems regarding rural development, marketing research, characteristics and analysis of selected branches as well as prognoses of the future development of agrisector.

In future, a lot of various competition stimuli are to be expected forcing the quality in all areas of research, a high degree of effectivity, strengthening interdisciplinary university research as well as its link to the out of university research.

Regarding the Conference International Science Days 2004 conclusions, it is possible to specify the science-research priorities for the further development of education processes at the Faculty of Economics and Management, which result from the entire development of Slovak agriculture after the accession period.

The major orientation of the science-research activities will tend to the following areas research:

- Integration trade and economic globalization, problems of agrarian policy, direct foreign investments in the agri-food area;
- Multifunctional agriculture, development of the Slovak rural areas in the after-accession period;
- Modeling of the Slovak agriculture in the unified Europe;
- Research of producers' marketing activities, processors and sellers of agrarian commodities;
- Aspects of using modern information – communication technologies in high school education;
- Modern trends of university specific education.

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