

Posting iCo-op Results/Activities on P1-P21 Organization Websites

Eleven universities from Armenia, Austria, Georgia, Germany, Romania, Spain, and Ukraine are engaged in Tempus IV project entitled ***Industrial Cooperation and Creative Engineering based on Remote Engineering and Virtual Instrumentation***, shortly – ***iCo-op***. The goal of this international 3-year project, as it is stated in its program, is to “*Empower university-enterprises partnership in Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine by modernizing engineering education based on remote engineering and virtual instrumentation.*” It is worth of mentioning the 3 specific objectives of the project, which are intended to ensure the successful achievement of the mentioned goal:

- Establish methodology for identification and monitoring of demand for knowledge and skills in industry;
- Create and implement learning programs that will incorporate transversal electronics technologies using remote laboratories and virtual instrumentation knowledge;
- Build mutually beneficial, sustainable partnerships between academia and enterprises by offering internship programs for university and up-to-date training programs for industry.

According to the Project Program, the workload is distributed among 7 interrelated work packages (WP), each of which is comprised of several specific deliverables. Leaders assigned for each work package coordinate activities of the partners within the corresponding work package and are responsible for the successful and timely completion of the deliverables in accordance with the Project timeline. The coordinator of the Project is Dr. Karsten Henke from Integrated Communication Systems Group, Ilmenau University of Technology, Germany.

During the first kick-off meeting that took place on December 3 and 4, 2012 in Ilmenau University of Technology, the partner universities introduced themselves, EU partners presented the concept of the iCo-op project, told about the proposed remote lab technologies and their possible implementations, and the work package leaders presented the corresponding work package deliverables and timeline. The meeting participants discussed also project management and financial issues.

	
<p><i>Group photo of kick-off meeting participants</i></p>	<p><i>Opening speech by Andreas Mitschele-Thiel, Head of ICS department</i></p>

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One of the initial tasks of the Project was to identify engineering knowledge demand in labor markets in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. This work, led by *National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute"* (NTU "KhPI") is being done within the framework of **WP1 (Analysis of the Existing Situation and Requirements of the Labor Market)**. To execute, monitor, and support activities of this WP, Experts Panels were established in Armenian, Georgian, and Ukrainian universities. The State Placement Service specialists were interviewed to define the current situation and dynamics of engineering disciplines, age group, educational structure, working experience in the labor market, etc. The findings of this investigation were summarized in reports. Questionnaires were prepared for different focus groups (students, HEI teachers, VET trainers, industry employers) and surveys were conducted to identify employers' expectations of the staff, companies' need for engineering knowledge and skills, as well as to improve efficiency of academia/enterprise cooperation. Exploring EU partners' experience in this area is one of the deliverables of this WP. To that end, our partners from Transilvania University of Brasov, Romania, hosted *3-day EU Best Practices Training* session that was held in the Center for Valorization and Transfer of Competence of the University from May 15 to 18. Our Romanian partners introduced the NI-ELVIS and i-LAB – MIT Remote Lab systems and their functionalities and the LabVIEW virtual instrumentation tool. The training participants had opportunity to practice on the systems.



Group photo of Brasov training participants

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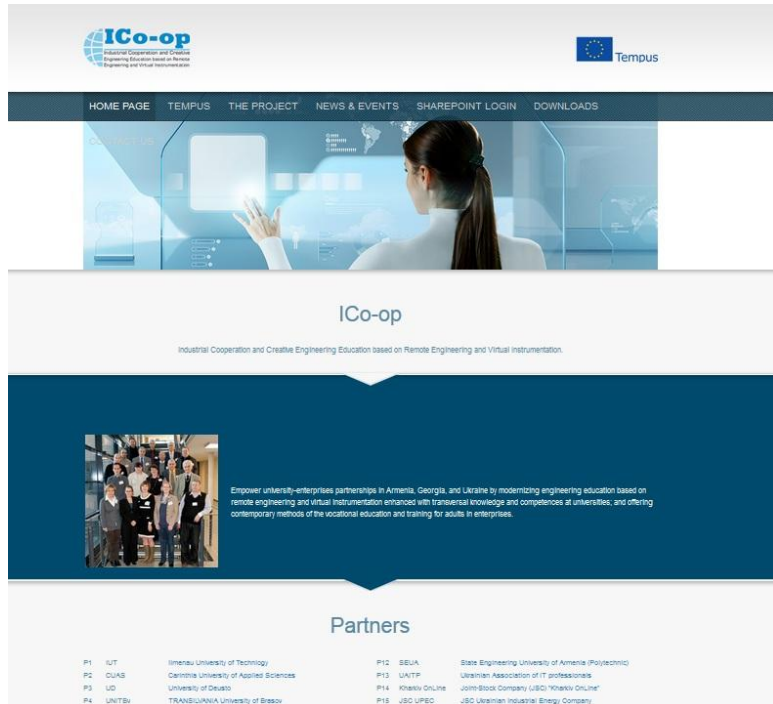


Training class

WP5 (Quality Assurance and Evaluation) is designed for the quality management of the overall Project as well as its activities, processes, and outputs. The lead partner of this WP is *Quality Austria – Training, Certification, and Evaluation Ltd.* Evaluation and Quality Assurance Plan is created - a document defining activities to ensure the quality of the Project outcomes and guide through ongoing evaluation process. Our Austrian partner also conducts surveys among Project partners after each meeting and after completion of each major portion of the Project to use the partners' feedback and propose ways to improve the communication between them and raise the efficiency of the work.

The aim of **WP6 (Dissemination and Sustainability)** that is coordinated by *American University of Armenia (AUA)* is to disseminate the project information among target groups – student associations, managers from industry and academy, university and state authorities, policymakers, etc., so that they be aware of the Project activities, understand them in detail, and be able to take part in the Project and benefit from its outcomes. The WP is also intended to create a model of efficient cooperation between Industry and Academy. For this purpose, all AM/GE/UA universities established University-Enterprise Executive Boards, with an aim to design new learning programs or revise existing ones and develop strategy plans for students' practical placement in enterprises. This WP includes various activities distributed throughout the project. Some of them are already done, such as:

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- iCo-op web portal is created by Ilmenau University of Technology (<http://www.ico-op.eu/>)

- NTU “KhPI” organized iCo-op workshop “Labor Market and Challenges for Higher Education” within the framework of the 5-th international interdisciplinary conference: «The Strategy of Innovative Development of Economy: Business, Science, Education» that took place 26-30 May, 2013 in Alushta, Ukraine.

- On May 25, 2013, AUA participated in Europe Day in Armenia event, where, along with other 15 Tempus projects currently underway in Armenia, iCo-op was also represented.



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iCo-op Results and Activities

Periodic meetings are scheduled to review the current situation and discuss forthcoming activities. The second such a meeting was hosted by NTU “KhPI” from June 5 to June 8. During the meeting sessions, the partner institutions presented the work done and the work package leaders reported about actual statuses of their packages. Also, the selection of the Remote Lab technologies was finalized by AM/GE/UA partners. These discussions were reflected in the final revision of the iCo-op Activity Delivery Plan.



Working on the Activity Delivery Plan