STUDENTS VISIT TO BRADFORD

Eighteen Ukrainian and Belarusian students from the 5 partner Universities took part in a study visit to the lead partner on the INNOLAB TEMPUS project – Bradford University in the UK, on 27 January – 7 February 2014. They participated in a series of events specially arranged for them to delve into the atmosphere of enterprise education and entrepreneurship. The most important of the events became Textile Industry i-Lab Training which started on the first day of the visit and ended with group work presentations by all the student teams on 3 February when the staff from the 5 partner Universities – National Technical University “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute”, National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy”, Uzhhorod National University in Ukraine, and Polotsk State University and Yanaka Kupala State University of Grodno in Belarus – arrived in Bradford on their study visit. The project work of the Belarusian and Ukrainian students named Bradford Textile Industry Challenge was shared with 9 local students Maarja Hallik, Mariusz Kos, Huma Khan, Aneela Paul, Aasiyah Tabassum, Hannah Fairburn, Emma Caldwell, Charlotte Heap, and Shelah Rashid.
Bradford Textile Industry Innovation Challenge

The Bradford Textile Industry Challenge was held during the first week of the students' visit to Bradford. It was facilitated by the SPACE/Bradford Challenge, a group of active people, mainly students, and also an innovation and collaboration platform to bring together students, the community and business partners to address pressing local or global challenges by finding new opportunities and creating game-changing projects and innovations (http://bradfordchallenge.co.uk/).

How did the students start?

In the beginning, the students were introduced into the current situation of the textile industry in the region, however, for better understanding it was linked to its historical background. Mr. Mark Clayton, an Economic Strategy Officer from the Bradford Council, presented a fascinating history of the city, illustrated with curious images and graphs in his presentation “The context of Bradford’s history, economy, latest developments and why it is important that we consider textile industry as part of the solution for economic regeneration”. After him there were two inspiring stories told to accentuate the potential of the textile industry.

Ms. Farnaz Khan was next on stage, sharing with the students her journey as an entrepreneur and how she developed the Fit Britches – innovative shape wear. Farnaz had a vast amount of insight into the challenges and opportunities of the textile industry, from the technology to the human capital. That was her effort to bring textile production back to Bradford.

Ms. Emma Hill, who started a social enterprise called “Re:considered” alongside her colleague Judy Connor, shared some similar sentiments to Farnaz when it came to pointing out the generational skills gap in the field. However, there are plenty of opportunities for entrepreneurs to make use of the textile “waste” to develop new products and avoid sending materials into landfill.

Team work arranged

Following the presentations, the participants were divided into four teams. They clarified the challenge once again, and made reflections on the morning session. The teams assisted by volunteer mentors, brainstormed for ideas, and discussed how they were going to work on the tasks ahead. After, the four groups started their research and brainstorming ideas.

In the process...

For better understanding of the situation in the textile industry in the region, the students had an “Inspiration and creativity walk” where they visited the Bradford College textile archive; Garden Mills, as well as landmarks in the city centre introducing the industrial and textile history.

The tour was led by Helen Farrar from the Bradford College. This indeed produced inspiration on the students so that they were able to think of what kind of input they would like to have into their project in the evening. They managed to identify main areas that need development.

During several days the teams worked on their ideas, video presentations, and finalisation of their concept papers.

The Bradford Textile Industry Challenge week-long session came to an end. The winners were identified after the teams’ presentations including their videos and answering questions from the panel on Monday morning. The panel made their...
decisions after considering the concept papers and the videos (http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLp63ntncZm_MskMigQmH5Nh5kTu5kACtj)

Our product ($F^2$) can be easily changed and recycled for further use.

Impressions

Student Group A

Students enterprise – in broad meaning this term means getting involved in enterprise activity at university it is not just starting new business. Why we came to Bradford from different countries, such as Ukraine, Belarus? In the first place, we came to share experience and to find something new for ourselves. Initially it was very difficult to work with people from different countries, different spheres of activity, having a different point of view. We had a very short period of time but managed to work out a common idea in our team. We all understood well that an error of one person could be a mistake of the whole group. First, none of us have ever had anything to do with textile industry. So we started from scratch which meant huge effort on our part. Nonetheless that was exciting indeed. We visited textile factories where we started thinking about things that could generate ideas for recycling. The trips around Bradford, discussions, brainstorming, and group work in general, led us to the idea of using natural fibres as a basis for absorbing material. That would allow not only to solve health problems, but help Bradford find a new fresh idea for a business organisation. We WON!!!

Student Group B

During our visit to Bradford University, we had an opportunity of working, brainstorming, discussing things in an international team. We gained experience of researching and creating new ideas on a completely new topic without having an extensive professional background. We did not only get theoretical knowledge but also saw development and production processes which helped us in our understanding of Bradford’s textile industry problems. At the presentation by Mark Clayton we got acquainted with the circular economy concept and recycling of textile waste. Then we applied this knowledge during our visit to the recycling centre with Emma Hill and suggested innovative ways of reusing such materials as coffee bags, bicycle tires and textile fibre waste. At the lecture delivered by Prof. Christos Kalantaridis we learned different approaches for entrepreneurship concepts and main features of entrepreneur's character with an example of successful Richard Cantillion. During the whole process of learning, researching and idea development at Bradford University we had productive cooperation with mentors who gave us directions of thinking. We developed other things during the team work ourselves which was an excellent experience in organisation of our own research at our home Universities.

Student Group D

It was completely amazing as experience for each member of our team. We all have different background and everybody found something new to learn. Also we got lots of practical skills we had no idea about before:

One of the most challenging things was working in a diversified group. We were not only from different counties with different languages but also with absolutely different way of thinking because of cultural and religious background. So we improved our soft skills in presenting own point of view and reaching compromise.

At the same time we needed to create very specific innovative idea in the condition of time shortage and new social environment.

Also, new and interesting experience for us was presenting our idea through video. Most of us had never done this before. And most of us decided to present our ideas in this way in the future, because we agreed it is the most optimal way.

And of course we can not ignore the benefits of experience exchange and practicing English.

Natalia Danylenko – NAUKMA, Kiev, Ukraine
Nikolay Kurian – YKSUG, Grodno, Belarus
Veronika Galagurych – UzhNU, Uzhgorod, Ukraine
Victoria Deshko – UzhNU, Uzhgorod, Ukraine
Student Group C

We were confronted with a challenge to create an innovative idea which would help both to develop Bradford industry and be eco-friendly in terms of circular economy, we had to adopt our ways of thinking to the existing environment.

Active participation in developing an idea gave us a strong set of experiences. Working on a specific case within textile industry in Bradford, our team’s combined knowledge, theoretical and practical, was aimed at finding the right solution for a particular problem.

Our team’s idea is a business model — WoolFord. A company sells its clients woollen clothes, which can be easily unknitted into yard again and gives them opportunity to return their garment and receive money back for next purchases in our store.

Oleksandr Butusov – UzhNU, Uzhgorod, Ukraine
Maryna Kosenko – NTU“KhPI”, Kharkiv, Ukraine
Olga Ivancho – NAUKMA, Kiev, Ukraine

Study visit to Bradford University on the project Tempus IV-3 -innolab- has once again given us an understanding of the importance of cooperation between universities and enterprises, as well as between universities in different countries. Olesandra Gumenne, NAUKMA, Kiev, Ukraine.

Group work gave us a chance to learn from each other. There were many benefits from analysing, discussing and exploring our own ideas as well as gaining feedback from each other.

Aryna Seliukova, NAUKMA, Kiev, Ukraine.

During time of students presentations as well as their feedback we’ve met with a new for us reality of mixed (international) students team – work. Hennadii Hryhoriev, NAUKMA, Kiev, Ukraine.

Overall, it was a great experience of working in a group. Divining responsibilities and making decisions together sometimes evolves into great and unpredictable results. Bringing people from different communities together creates a mix of ways of thinking and generates innovative ideas.

Oleksandr Butusov – UzhNU, Uzhgorod, Ukraine
Maryna Kosenko – NTU“KhPI”, Kharkiv, Ukraine
Olga Ivancho – NAUKMA, Kiev, Ukraine

WHAT IS NOW?

Now the students are back in their studies at their home Universities. They are impressed and full of energy. They will definitely participate in the INNOLABS at each partner University in Belarus and Ukraine by contributing their ideas to the ideas market. Very soon open innovation platforms will be introduced at each of the five Ukrainian and Belarusian Universities and the INNOLABS start working. There will be certain upgrades in the existing curricula so that “Creative Thinking” and “Open Innovations” modules will be included to allow students work as teams in their classrooms and outside.

To attract a larger audience of students different internal dissemination events are being organised at all the partner Universities in Belarus and Ukraine. For more information and participation you may contact the people at your local University or a partner University in a different country:

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Maryna Kosenko – NTU“KhPI”, Kharkiv, Ukraine
Olga Ivancho – NAUKMA, Kiev, Ukraine

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