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WELCOME TO UNIBILITY! University Meets Social Responsibility



UNIBILITY project group at the kick-off meeting in Vienna – October 2015

Universities increasingly strive to strengthen their public commitment to the city they are located in, to the local economy and to the wider society through their research and higher education activities, in order to have a real impact on their local communities and improve the relevance of higher education in society. In 2015 a joint project between five European universities was launched to explore this topic – coordinated by the University of Vienna, Postgraduate Centre (Austria) and funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the EU.

OBJECTIVES OF THE UNIBILITY PROJECT

UNIBILITY aims to:

- Enhance the commitment of universities in local communities
- Develop strategies how universities can increase their social responsibility actively on student and researcher level
- Develop practical service learning projects impacting the social environment
- Develop training material and train university management and students in “University Social Responsibility” (USR)
- Create learning networks between universities and local business, the environmental sector and the social sector

THE READER “FROM CSR TO USR”



UNIBILITY project partners working on the structure of the Reader “From CSR to USR”

The first output of the UNIBILITY project is the READER “*From CSR to USR*”, which is about to be finalized and will be online on our website for download by February 29, 2016. The Reader is a

comprehensive and intensive reader-friendly literature overview for those who want to gain knowledge about university’s social responsibility (USR). It includes recent studies on USR, theory and policy papers with summaries in English for a quick overview of the current literature. Some of the most interesting and lately published texts about CSR and USR have been collected by the UNIBILITY partners in this reader.

The Reader includes the respective full text and an English summary and aims at providing a comprehensive overview of why universities should act responsibly.

What is UNIBILITY up to in 2016?



Are you interested in universities' social responsibility? Would you like to know more about university-business cooperation or how researchers can approach NGOs?

If you are interested in good practice examples and on how social responsibility is implemented, you should have a look at our *Toolkit of Practices*, in which practices from Spain, Portugal, Austria, Ireland, Slovenia and Romania are analysed. The *Toolkit of Practices* will be available by April 2016, so keep checking the UNIBILITY website not to miss it!



You are also invited to join us for **“Meeting Social Responsibility. A Staff Training Week” from 9 to 13 May 2016 in Vienna (Austria)**. This event will be the chance to discuss with others the challenges of your daily work in the field of USR. The event is addressed to researchers, as well as marketing and administrative staff of universities to talk about USR practices. Flights to join the event will be paid by the project partnership. Contact us, if you are interested in participating. The programme of the training will be available online soon!



University of Barcelona – Learning from the Office for CSR

The University of Barcelona can be considered a pioneer university when it comes to corporate social responsibility. It created a dedicated office in 2009, which is in charge of monitoring activities and projects linked to the university's social responsibility. We interviewed *Maurici Romero Mulero*, Head of the Office for Internal Control, Risks and Corporate Social Responsibility.



Maurici Romero

1. ***“What do you do exactly in the Internal Control, Risks and Corporate Social Responsibility Office?”***

Mulero: “One of the main task of our Office is to prepare an annual report on social responsibility following the guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the functions that the UB’s Committee for Social Responsibility assigns to us. The UB Committee for Social Responsibility is a political body with representatives of various stakeholders (society, students, workers, managers, the Rector, unions, etc.). Currently we are in charge of several projects:

- *The UNIBILITY project*
- *Adaptation of the Economy for the Common Good to the UB*
- *Adaptation of GRI indicators to the context of a higher education institution*

- *Incorporation of social and environmental clauses in the procurement of services and purchases of goods by the UB*
- *Code of Social Responsibility (pending approval by the UB’s governing team).”*

2. ***“Why was the office founded?”***

Mulero: “The Office was created in 2009 with the arrival of the current rector Dídac Ramírez to strengthen the efficient use of university funds and to strengthen social responsibility in our university. In the elections for the Rector’s Office in 2008 social responsibility was a central tenet in the management system proposed by Dídac Ramírez, who was finally the winning candidate. As a result of this commitment he decided to create the Office.”

3. “What can you recommend to other universities who are planning to establish such an office?”

Mulero: “Considering that it would be a new office and that it would be necessary to collect a lot of accurate information from different people and administrative units:

- *The head of the office should be a person with a holistic perspective and global knowledge of the organization.*
- *The head of the office must have effective capacity within the*

organization in order to have his demands met properly and on time.
- *The involvement of the university government is required. USR has to be a basic strategic area and its importance has to be displayed within the university community. Doing this, the administrative units will understand that the requests made by the social responsibility office are important and must be dealt with promptly. “*

“Thank you for the interview!”

PARTNERS

The UNIBILITY consortium consists of universities from Austria, Slovenia, Romania, Spain, Portugal and Ireland and of eucen, a network of universities from all over Europe with over 180 members. The partnership is geographically well spread over Europe and brings together partners with complementary experience and know-

how in the fields addressed by the project. Full list of partners: **University of Vienna**, Postgraduate Center (AT), **eucen** - European University Continuing Education Network (BE), **University Politehnica of Bucharest** (RO), **Public University of Ptuj** (SI), **University of Porto** (PT), **University of Barcelona** (ES), **Dublin City University** (IE).

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