

Challenges of Integration on the International Level of the Department of Wood Processing of Latvia University of Agriculture

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Taking into account the present situation in forest industry, it is necessary to look for new possibilities how to improve the study process, and how to create conditions and possibilities for the education of new specialists to recover the industry more efficiently exploiting the existing resources, and thus designing new technologies and developing products with higher value added. It is significant for the general development of the forest industry to foster the development of innovations which is possible due to motivation of more gifted students to undertake studies on Master level and doctoral level both in Latvia and abroad.

Hence a specialisation within the wood processing study programme is created and extended, and potential students when entering Latvia University of Agriculture (LLU) will have the possibility to choose the specialisation to acquire more extended knowledge:

- wood products and technologies;
- industrial design;
- wood product marketing and logistics.

In order to implement successfully the started scientific research as well as to multiply recognition the researchers from the Department of Wood Processing are actively involved in several scientist work-groups such as COST E 34 action "Bonding of Timber", COST E44 action "Wood Processing Strategy", and COST E53 action "Quality Control for Wood and Wood Products". These work-groups were established with the goal to unite scientific competences concentrating on workout of methods of disrupting and non-disrupting wood and wood material research and approbation of these methods as well as workout and development of innovative wood materials. The work in these scientists unions is a great possibility for researchers to be in touch with the latest tendencies in scientific environment as well as to establish contacts and develop cooperation possibilities with the leading researchers in Europe.

The Department of Wood Processing in cooperation with Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Institute is involved in the activities of technological platform the goal of which is to unite the opinions of the interested parties in order to define strategic research programme in several strategically important issues with high social significance where the development, competitiveness and long-term goals of European future depend on significant steps of research development and technologies in shorter and longer terms.

However, the international integration is ensured not only on scientific level but also in academic environment. Both the methodological basis and the material basis should be created in order to foster and develop the exchange of students on international level. The Department of Wood Processing has close cooperation contacts with several institutions of higher education in Europe, for example, Ecole Supérieure du Bois in Nante, France; Poznan Technological University in Poznan, Poland; and Kaunas Technological University in Kaunas, Lithuania. The countries that belong to small language group should implement study programmes in other languages to ensure their graduates with the best possibilities in international competition, since the European Union offers many cooperation programmes in the field of education. Recognising this, the leading European universities and professional university colleges create separate study modules in English thus involving young people of many countries in the environment of international education and research cooperation.

The project "The Improvement of Master Studies Programmes of the Faculty of Forest, LLU for Integration into International Educational Space" is worked out to foster the implementation of students' exchange programme both on the inter-disciplinary level and on the international level. In case of successful implementation of the project the updating and essential improvement of the content of Master study programme of the Faculty of Forest, LLU, could be carried out as well as ensured its involvement into international and inter-disciplinary educational space giving opportunity to undertake

studies in the Master programme not only to the Faculty graduates of Bachelor studies programmes but also to graduates of Bachelor programmes from related specialties. Thus the educational system would be improved, and competent specialists appropriate to the needs of the fast-growing and developing industry would enter the sector. At the same time a tight link between the studies and the industry could be created implementing the activities of improvement of study programme and research possibilities. Introducing study courses on interdisciplinary marketing and logistics, construction, and industrial design, and partly delivering them in English, students develop competences which are currently necessary for the development processes as new enterprises and services of the branch are developing exactly in these fields.

Key words: wood processing, wood products and technologies, international relationships, integration model.