

Communication on Engagement of the Association of the European Business (Belarus)

The Association of European business is a Belarusian independent non-governmental association uniting leading European companies, which plan to do or do business in Belarus. The AEB seeks to boost the competitiveness of Belarusian business climate by promoting mutually beneficial cooperation between European and domestic businesses.

Our goals:

- helping European companies adapt to the Belarusian market and promoting their joint interests;
- creating a common platform for mutually beneficial partnerships of European and national companies;
- improving business climate in Belarus by building a dialogue between European, national companies and state authorities;
- providing analytical and expert support to European companies in Belarus;
- promoting Belarusian national traditions and culture in the business community;
- implementing initiatives of corporate social responsibility in the Belarusian business community.

The AEB has implemented two Corporate social responsibility initiatives from 2014-2015. There are the Job Shadow Days initiative and the Pilot Green Project.

About the Job Shadow Days project:

In Belarus the gap between universities and business continues to grow. For a long time the companies in Belarus have told that it's impossible to get a prepared specialist, he needs to be reeducated.

There are the gaps between universities and business at different levels. For example, in practice curricula don't refer to practice. Disciplines don't correspond to the up-to-date demands of professions, the subjects are too overloaded with theory, the time-management for studying isn't proportional, etc.

Even students often complain that each year they study the same subjects under different names. Or, vice versa, because of the program reduction the minimum of academical hours is given for a discipline, which covers plenty of aspects. Business points at the fact that, for example, the level of a language proficiency is insufficient for work at the international market.

Students have absolutely logical questions like: why should I study at a university if I don't satisfy the requirements of my future employer? Just for a diploma? Disappointment in the Belarusian higher education push young people to go abroad.

In 2015 Belarus joined the Bologna Process, and now curricula are actively being corrected, they are being squared with the curricula of the European universities. The challenge ahead the lecturers is to develop proper curricula in accordance with the demands of business and the tendencies of the world economy. To make such a transition, such a titanic transformation the Belarusian system of education needs to work closely with the representatives of the foreign business in particular and the main is really to make advance.

The Association of European business has promoted the CSR-initiative Job Shadow Days for three years as an example that companies and universities can easily start active cooperation to make curricula closer to the demands of business.

What is the Job Shadow Days? This is a popular on-the-job learning practice. It allows to familiarize a student with a profession by means of shadowing an experienced person (a mentor) in a real working environment during a standard work day. Being in a collective a "shadow" can learn more about a specific character of both a chosen job and others, to get important information and the main – to see with their own eyes what a job is like, often- in a company of your dream. The opportunity to go beyond theory and to plunge into practice allows many students to change their opinion about a job, to awake their interest in it. Sometimes having seen their job on the inside, a student comes to understanding that the chosen field doesn't come up to expectations and that he wants to develop in another direction.

The companies, which have already participated in the initiative point out that the Job Shadow Days is an effective tool for a job training of employees themselves as well as for looking for new ones that share the corporate spirit of the company. Firstly, the appointment of a staff member a mentor boosts their self-esteem and motivation. Secondly, thanks to JSD companies can engage the best and motivated students. Thirdly, it's an opportunity to look at your job from another angle and to remember the beginning of the career. Finally, work with students is white PR for a company.

The idea of carrying out such an initiative in Belarus arose at the meeting of the AEB working group on staff training challenges (HR-committee of the AEB) for international companies in 2014. Since then, the AEB has been an organizer of the Job Shadow Days in our country. Moreover, the AEB is a member of the UN Global Compact Network in Belarus, and the JSD one of the corporate and social responsibility projects.

The Association of European Business has announced the sixth admission of mentors among the business community to participate in the action Job Shadow

Days - 2017 in Minsk. Any top-manager or specialist, who represents a private company working in Belarus, can become a mentor (participation in the JSD is free both for mentors and students). To participate in the initiative each mentor should fill out an e-application and be ready to spend one day from 11 to 21 May with a student at the workplace, telling about the specific character of your job.

Every talented student of the 2d-4th courses of Belarusian universities specialized in marketing, law, economics / finance, IT, PR, HR, design, architecture and others can become a “shadow” of the Job Shadow Days.

As the experience of carrying out the Job Shadow Days shows, to obtain good results students don't always need longtime practice, accompanied and reinforced by a superfluous workflow. 1-2 days of cooperation of truly interested and open professionals and talented, hard-working, highly motivated students is necessary. After it universities can get clear answers to the questions on how it's necessary to change or correct a curriculum of specialists of varied employment- from humanitarians to digitheads.

Job Shadow Days

Allows students to:

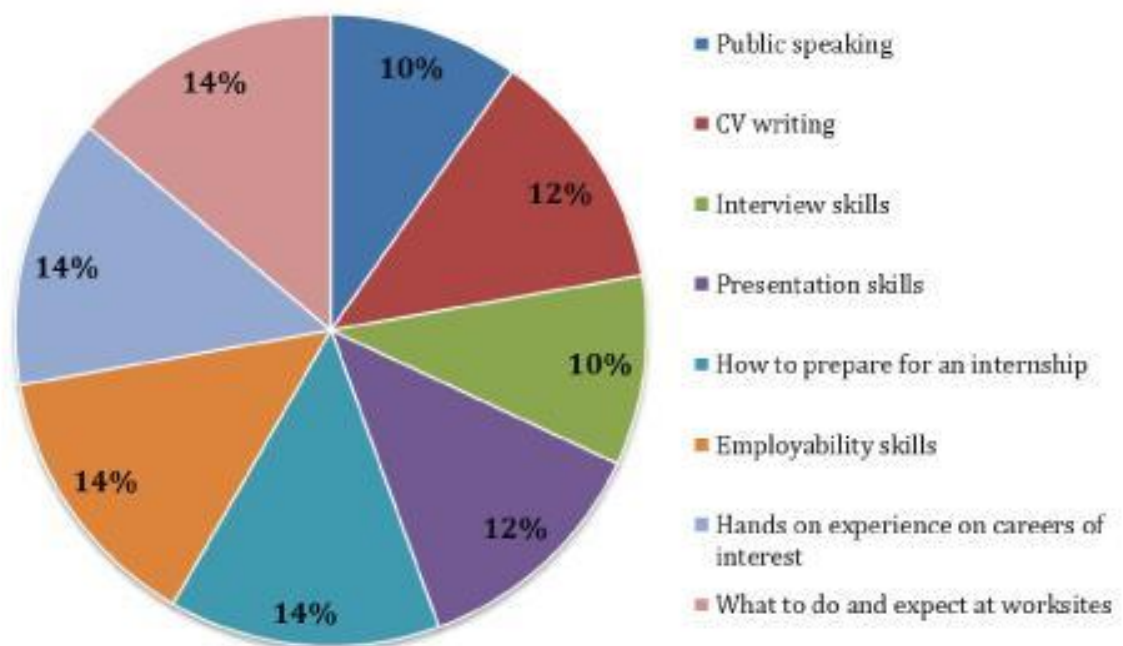
- Gain firsthand experience
- Test their interest in the chosen field
- Test their knowledge in the field
- Correct their academic plan
- Expand their network
- Take advice from professionals for the future
- Learn about the company's brand and philosophy, career opportunities
- To land a job

Benefits for mentors:

- Boost of self-esteem and motivation
- Improvement of presentation skills
- Engagement of the best students with fresh ideas and opinions
- Obtaining of future efficient and loyal employees
- Opportunity to look at your job from a different angle

- Better understanding of each other's work
- Successful brand building by showing pro-active attitude to the development issue
- White PR and the goodwill of the student community to the company

Skills offered during job shadowing program



Feedback from participants.

We collected opinions of students-“shadows” about their internship in companies:

Job Shadowing - a great example proving that a picture worth a thousand words.

Christina Sivokha:

It is worth noting that this is a great opportunity to see what you want to do in the future and whether this profession really suits you. It was great! Thanks a lot to the organizers!

Anastasia Klyshko:

I would like to thank the Association of European Business for the opportunity to be a "shadow". This is a very good and necessary thing for students. My long-standing wish came true. Thank you! And I was very lucky to have Anna Gafurova as a mentor. Very nice, smart and motivating lady. I will be pleased to recommend your project!

Antonina Morozova:

It was also very interesting to take notice of workers' opinions about lawyer's job and responsibilities. Sometimes they did not coincide at all. Thank you for this opportunity! It is a valuable experience concerning practical knowledge and realizing, whether you want to work in such type of company.

Angelina Moiseenko:

I realized that perhaps one of the most difficult thing in the job related to PR-activities is that you should always be full of fresh ideas, something unusual, extraordinary. Sometimes it's not so easy. However it is very interesting and I am not disappointed with my choice. It is really good to spend at least one day in a company and to see what a specialist is doing. We were given good advice and recommendations for the future. Thank you very much for this opportunity!

Julia Karlovich:

The Job Shadow Days have brought joy and provided a lot of new information. I was very glad to get into such a friendly team. We had fun and I received answers to all my questions. And what is more important – They gave me a lot of energy and inspiration. Thank you!!!

Elena Fedulova:

First of all I would like to thank the Association of European Business for this opportunity. It was a great chance to directly ask a potential employer on all aspects that interest a young undergraduate and to make sure that you have chosen the "right" profession. In a pleasant atmosphere every employee – from the managing partner Darya Zhuk to a legal assistant – shared with us some experience and explained their vision of working in this sphere.

The AEB experience in implementing **the "Pilot Project for Integrated Waste Management of Dairy Enterprises"**. This initiative is in the process of implementation and affects one of the most "not covered by grants" spheres.

The economic area is the most unpopular for receiving donor support.

The AEB initiative is implemented within the framework of the project "Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus", which is financed by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Development Program. One of the strategic tasks of these donors is the development of a green economy. According to the rules of international technical assistance, the grantor can not finance the economy or commercial enterprises in its pure form (aid will be considered as an investment having purely commercial benefits). It is not easy to prepare a project that would be harmonious both in the sphere of solving social problems and economically profitable. In addition, the culture of positioning and promotion of social, environmental solutions in conjunction with business tasks is not widespread in Belarus. The Association of European Business "green" Initiative for the utilization of curd whey is a large-scale project of corporate social responsibility of business (CSR) at the state level.

The idea of recycling is not new. But at the same time waste is traditionally understood as household waste. But we started to process the curd whey, which is a by-product in the production of dairy products. It was found that the harm to the nature of one ton of whey is equal to the damage from 100 cubic meters of household wastewater. We decided to support in a desire to protect the ecology in their area or region.

The project will install special equipment that can process 110 tons of curd whey every day into an important part of the feed for cattle. This ingredient is currently being purchased abroad. Savings will be about 12.9 thousand rubles a day. It is important to note that about 8000 calves can be fed by the resulting product per day.

Without changing the structure or profile of the enterprise, we are introducing new green technologies. They solve existing environmental problems, and also bring an obvious economic benefit from the production of an import-substituting product. In addition, the AEB project provides training for technologists of dairy processing enterprises, which will increase their level of environmental awareness and professional competencies.

Under the new provision of the strategy of international technical assistance in Belarus, projects supported by international donors should be carried out in cooperation with the business, which is brought to the level of co-financing of "social" participants. In fact, such co-financing and joint implementation of Initiatives give businesses CSR bonuses: from the PR component to, as in our case, new equipment. Donors change the strategy, turning it towards business. And this is

good, because finally in Belarus in the chain "business - state - public organization - donor" begins the movement.

Description of the problem in Belarus

Belarus feels confident in producing dairy products and supplying them to the world markets, not only European. Today, Belarus takes a 10% share of the global market of tallow oil, a 9% share in cheese-making, confident position in the top ten exporters of milk. It is important to note that so rosy statistics is deserved by not only large enterprises, but also some medium ones producing author products. A large number of research work on the creation, improvement of technological processes and equipment required for the processing of whey has been conducted. All of it is focused on working with large volumes of material. Small ones remain dangerous for the environment of certain regions. Particularly there is an acute problem in relation to the processing of acid (caseous and casein) whey by small businesses. It is poorly exposed to technological operations: thickening and drying. The product obtained is of poor quality and can't be used in food production. Acid whey in Belarus takes up 40% of total obtained in whey production. «Green Economy» is a relatively new concept for Belarus. In Europe, ecological principles, which our society is not yet fully ready to, are followed not the first decade. It is unique for the Belarusian business and brings an important idea: «Developing «green economy» in the country, it is possible to count on the support of the international community». Owing to insufficient technical equipping the named component couldn't have been utilized earlier.

Focused on

That is why the pilot «green» project of the Association of European Business is focused on the neutralization of small volumes of whey. It was among the 16 winners selected from 150 applications submitted to the UNDP contest of «green» initiatives in 2015. It has been implemented by the AEB in partnership with "Factory of fruit flavors", a small company in Vitebsk, which produces food products on the basis of fruit and berry.

Effect of the implementation of the project

The pilot initiative involves the creation of conditions for complex 100 per cent processing from dairy enterprises.

- design of the membrane purification installation with replaceable membrane for cheese, cottage cheese and casein whey processing (each sort of whey needs installation of separate membranes);
- preparation of the project and estimate documentation for the embedding of the membrane purification installation into the existing production line of milk plant processing;

- production, delivery and supply of the membrane purification installation at the existing food products processing and fruit filling preparation enterprise;
- setup of the filtration processes, pasteurization, cooling of whey (the whey with low part of dry substances).

Aims and tasks of the local initiative.

Aim: complex 100 per cent utilization of wastage from dairy enterprises by means of withdrawal from circulation and further processing of milk whey to a finished product – Condensed milk whey.

Task implementation:

- to implement the pilot for Vitebsk region project on complex milk whey utilization (wastage from dairy enterprises of Vitebsk region)
- to create the base for further processing of food industry utilized products.
- to create new workplaces.

Work performed.

During the covered period of the project execution:

The implementation of **Action 1** was finished:

Developed and obtained:

- A) Engineering part of the planning documentation, which provides technology solution of the milk processing line deployment in an office-production building.
- B) Design part of the planning documentation, which provides the making of milk processing plant. We did market research to choose a service provider.
- C) The conclusion report of the State institution “Centre for Hygiene & Epidemiology of Vitebsk city & Vitebsk region” for the project compliance with sanitary standards and law.

The implementation of **Action 2** was provided.

2.1. – Technical task for the request for quotation to buy the main part of milk processing line technological equipment.

2.1. – Technical task for the request for quotation to render installation and setup services of the main part of the technological equipment.

The technological task development was based on the forms of the UNDP including offer collection principles.

The implementation of **Action 3** was provided.

The communication strategy of the project implementation was prepared with the assistance of the expert Beresnev P.D.

The available information, human, technical and financial resources, which can be in demand in the implementation of the communication strategy, were analyzed during the preparation.

The target audiences were marked, the key messages were formulated. The AEB members discussed the formed communication and target audiences goals and the proper changes were made in the draft of the communication strategy.

The PR-specialist chose the most effective communication strategy tools and drew up the detailed communication plan for the whole period of the project implementation – until the end of the second quarter of 2017. The indicators of the communication strategy accomplish efficiency were identified, the information policy was described in detail also.

The communication strategy is confirmed by the AEB and the “Fabrika fruktovyh vkusov” staff and reconciled with the project “SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO A GREEN ECONOMY IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS”.

Apart from the work on the strategy, the PR-specialist posted news about the support of the AEB green initiative by the project “SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO A GREEN ECONOMY IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS”.

The announcements for purchase, installation and setup were posted as well. In addition, the mailing list was made up and the proposals were sent out to the manufacturing companies and to the fixers of the similar equipment.

The project administration (**Action 4**) was provided:

- the contracts for work and labor were signed
- the account in the bank was opened
- the working meetings were held.

The involvement of ecotourism subjects/population/other members into the implementation of the local initiative:

NGO “The center for environmental solutions”

The private company “Alternativnaya cifrovaya set'», “Zubr Capital”

The Vitebsk region committee of natural resources and environment protection

The Vitebsk regional executive committee

The analysis of the outputs and the tasks:

The staff of the pilot initiative was formed (a manager, an accountant and a PR-specialist).

Developed:

- Engineering part of the planning documentation involving:
 - 1) the technology solution of the milk processing line deployment in an office-production building.
 - 2) the design part of the planning documentation, which provides the making of milk processing plant.
- Technical task for the request for quotation to buy the main part of milk processing line technological equipment.
- Technical task for the request for quotation to render installation and setup services of the main part of the technological equipment.
- The communication strategy of the project implementation
- The announcements for purchase, installation and setup were posted.
- The first monitoring visit on the project implementation was made; the protocol of assistance with the Vitebsk regional executive committee was signed
- Co-financing: the AEB involves the in-house lawyer to provide the enrollment of the project and the legal support of the project activities.

Problems and difficulties:

The 1st problem relates to the lengthy period of the recording of the list to the first appropriated tranche. The project manager decided to record the list only according to the 1st tranche as there is no the complete and precise description of the configuration for purchase under the second tranche. The description of the full configuration in the list is possible only after the development of the planning documentation.

The second problem regards to the complexities of the payment for work and services on actual basis, i.e. without prepayment.

The third problem regards to the absence of technological opportunities of service providers to accept payment without VAT.

The fourth problem regarded to the lengthy period of getting the conclusion report from the zonal centre for hygiene. Taking into account risks it was decided not to announce tender for the procurement of equipment until we got the conclusion report.

The fifth problem regards to the order of the Central tax office: the extra fee NSSF was charged from the planning outpayments, what wasn't supposed according to the project budget.

Our conclusions and recommendations:

For more than 20 years of the work of the UN organizations and other international funders in Belarus the international technical assistance recording rules haven't been essentially simplified; the recording periods of lists haven't been shortened in practice. A longstanding registration procedure regards to the increasing amount of the lists, which are submitted to the Ministry of Economic Development while the staff that examine them remain small. We recommend to inform the UN leadership about it.

Success stories:

- 1) For the pilot initiative application of funds it was necessary to develop the form of a tripartite treaty. The AEB with the involvement of the lawyer developed such a form, which henceforth was disseminated as the example of the best practice, which can be used for the implementation of other project pilot initiatives.
- 2) The AEB delayed the payment of communication services for March and April 2016 as the servicing operator "Alternativnaya set'", technically couldn't appropriate VAT and to take the payment without VAT. The AEB member, "Zubr Capital", facilitated a solution to this problem. On the initiative of the "Zubr Capital", the servicing operator "Alternativnaya set'" did technical transformations to take payments without VAT not only from the AEB, but also from other grant performers.