



NEWSLETTER
DOUBLE ISSUE
March/ April 2013

WELCOME TO THE FIRST DOUBLE NEWSLETTER FOR THE GADGET PROJECT!

So what is **GADGET**? Our overall objective is to trial a pilot action in three EU countries specially aimed at developing University-Industry linkages, with a focus on the environmental and energy sectors and a particular emphasis on the employability of our University graduates. How can we prepare them for the marketplace, especially in these times of crisis and uncertainty?

Running over two years and partially funded by the European Commission's Erasmus Lifelong Learning programme, the project will aim to achieve a number of ambitious objectives:

- ▶ Stimulate linkages between the higher education sector and industry.

- ▶ Define exactly what the needs of the labour market are now and in the future.
- ▶ Attempt to improve the skillset of our academics so that they are more suitable for the demands of their future employers
- ▶ See how we can boost local and regional economic development by working more closely together.
- ▶ Optimise our knowledge exchange activities.
- ▶ Throughout the process, to try to identify environmental and energy solutions whilst also promoting the policies and agenda of the European Union.

Our targets are ambitious: Analyse the supply and demand relationship between 50 and 4 Higher Education Institutions within each of the three regions; involve a wide range of stakeholders through our activities including face to face cafes, online surveys and downloads; initiate 90 collaboration schemes involving industry trainees, 9 new research linkages between industry and universities, and incorporate 9 visiting professors from industry into the University Environment.

Because **GADGET** is a pilot action. We hope to create a methodology that can be replicated by other HEIs. It has been constructed around a sound methodological base: analysis leads to conclusions, conclusions to action, and action to results.

STEP 1:

Identification – determining weaknesses, current processes, knowledge gaps and good practices **GADGET** examines 3 areas of cooperation university-provided training for updating employee skills, the skills of future graduates, and participation of industry in research and teaching. An analysis of the state of the art in each of these areas will take place in three participating countries: Spain, UK and Austria.

STEP 2:

Implementation – establishing specific collaboration schemes After matching up supply against demand, HEI partners and industry will establish a number of pilot cooperation schemes based on the areas of teaching, research and training. Such schemes will provide case studies and lessons learned.

STEP 3:

Exploitation – transferring good practice to relevant stakeholders Focus will be on transferring good practice to other HEIs via platforms and social media. The project will culminate in a large-scale conference.

	Country	Institution
	Spain	University of Alicante
	Spain	Idasa Sistemas
	Spain	Fundación Empresa Universidad de Alicante de la Comunidad Valenciana
	Austria	FH Joanneum
	Austria	Start-up & Service Centre Fürstenfeld
	Austria	Rosendahl Maschinen GmbH
	United Kingdom	Glasgow Caledonian University
	United Kingdom	AppleGreenHomes
	United Kingdom	Scottish Chambers of Commerce

FIRST GADGET CAFÉ HELD IN AUSTRIA

The **GADGET** “Café” concept was introduced into the project structure as an informal meeting point between higher education, companies and business intermediaries. Mobilising contacts from the two sectors of education and work to discuss in an informal setting would ultimately provide dialogue and build rapport and contacts. Some project aspects, such as the benchmarking and analytical phase, go part of the way towards determining the current and future needs of business in terms of research, and graduate capabilities and skills. However, the importance and efficiency of informal contact building and discussion cannot be underestimated. By using business intermediaries, such as Chambers of Commerce, to hold informal meeting days we can promote linkages. In summary, the Café experience works almost like a speed-dating setup. People from both education and business in common fields (in the case of **GADGET** - we are interested in piloting linkages related to energy) can come together and discuss current research, teaching materials and industry needs. From informal gatherings concrete plans can, and do, develop.

The first GADGET Café in Austria, organized by the GZSZ Fürstenfeld – the Austrian intermediary project partner – with support from the FH JOANNEUM, took place on the 27th of February 2013 in the Falkensteiner Therme & Golf Hotel in Bad Waltersdorf. Successful university-industry collaborations were presented in front of 70 invited guests. Ludwig Ems, the director of GZSZ Fürstenfeld -, led through the evening.

In the first presentation of the event, DI Michael Wagner from Rosendahl GmbH – the Austrian company project partner- pointed out, how important cooperation with universities is for his company. Universities and other research institutions support Rosendahl in developing innovative solutions, which are used in order to strengthen its market position as a global market leader.

Mario Fallast of the SME smaXtec presented a very unique product. The company developed a measuring instrument to be inserted into a cow’s stomach that helps to observe its digestion. It is noteworthy that this company was formed by students and its employees have also worked for this company during the duration of their study.

DI Michael Sedlak, from the intermediary organization Business and Innovation Center in the Austrian state Burgenland and **GADGET** quality board member, presented possible ways of university-industry cooperation. He argued that even if the aims, language and image of the business and the university world are different, the benefits for both can be enormous. He also introduced several collaboration funding possibilities in Austria and highlighted the important role of intermediaries regarding university-industry cooperation.

In a panel discussion all speakers further talked about their experiences with university-company cooperation and answered questions from the audience.

The last point on the agenda of the GADGET Café was the presentation of the Hidden Champions Award 2011/12. Local organizations received the distinction based on their innovative ways of doing business. The evening was concluded with a buffet and networking session in the Falkensteiner Therme & Golf hotel.



The GADGET Team from Austria with event participants: Left: DI Michael Wagner- Rosendahl GmbH, Dr. Ludwig Ems- GZSZ Fürstenfeld, participants; Middle: Mag. (FH) Jaqueline Egger- GZSZ Fürstenfeld, DI Michael Sedlak- BIC Burgenland; Right: Mag. Rene Wenzel & Mag. (FH) Lisa Mahajan – FH JOANNEUM

NEWS AND EVENTS

2nd Austrian GADGET Café on 25th April and consortium meeting on 7th & 8th May at FHJ.

5th Cleantech Innovators Club will organized by The Federation of Austrian Industries, Eco World Styria and Graz University of Technology hosted at Campus 02 (University of Applied Sciences) in Graz / Austria. Gadget Café will form part of the event

Aim of the event: Presentation of current R&D results in the energy and environmental technology sector / Innovative projects and their practical realization / platform for discussions with entrepreneurs and experts.

INTERVIEW WITH AN ENTERPRISE

No1. Alan Wallace of AppleGreen Homes Ltd.

In a series of interviews, successful stories of University-Industry co-operation will be presented in our Newsletter.

How did you get started in the first place?

■ Well, originally I was in retail. I worked for the Co-op. One day I ordered 3000 gro-bags instead of 300. The company was not too happy! They sent two containers to pick them up. The next week I was in France in an ENCAP hotel and realised that my room was about the same size as these containers. I measured them when I got back home and realised they were actually bigger. I originally had the idea for modular prisons and now I have managed to get Home Office approval for these. In the mean time BRE the Building Research Establishment contacted me and asked me if I would like to build some modular homes for the BRE innovation park. I said I would only go down that route if we could produce one of the most affordable, energy efficient homes in the UK. So that's how it started. I teamed up with researchers from GCU and some architects in Glasgow and we designed what we think are the most affordable energy efficient houses in the UK. The design has moved on from containers and now use steel frame modules.

So do you have any background in design, or construction...?

■ Nothing at all.

So you think that if you had had a different idea in another field,

you would have gone down a similar route?

■ Well, we first had the idea for modular prisons back in January 2007 I sent an email to people like John Reid, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, saying I could solve their prison overcrowding crisis. I actually got a reply the very same day from the Home Office, asking me to come down to London. They said it was a good idea but advised me to go away and research it. Get a University on board. So, entrepreneur? I knew I was getting too old for retail and would have to think of something. So, yeah I suppose I would have come up with another idea if it hadn't been modular housing. But I have to say that since working with BRE the idea has expanded quite dramatically.



Alan Wallace of AppleGreen Homes Ltd.

I've seen similar ideas for modular housing using containers in London and elsewhere. Did you know they existed or did it happen at the same time?

■ I knew from the very beginning that there was modular build in Europe. Modular build was quite common. And even in the UK, some companies had done it. But I brought in an ex CEO of Saatchi and Saatchi to help me build a brand, as he put it. And we knew if we could successfully build a brand we could build a product. And from the beginning we feel we have created a brand better than other companies. So now we get enquiries from the US, China, the Middle East, Mexico, Brazil... Almost constantly.

So if I asked you what the secret was to your success you would say it was the brand?

■ Exactly.

And going on now to your relationship with the University, how do you think GCU helped you to develop?

■ Well because my background has nothing to do with construction, because my background is nothing but selling beans, I needed the credibility of the University. People will respect a University's findings or research and development because they're independent. I don't have any influence over any of the R&D that they carry out. They just do it. I don't develop anything without the University looking at it first.

What specifically did they do?

■ Thermal performance...for the design stage, what size window to use, what kind of solar panels to use, what sort of heating to use. To make the houses as efficient as possible. The architects worked with the University and the University would tell them that the windows were too big or it was using the wrong thermal panels... And after a year they had developed the product that we see today.

What made you decide on the ecological, environmental route?

■ To begin with it was just a tick box exercise. But then what really made the difference was fuel poverty. With utility bills increasing and so much part of people's outgoings, we felt it was the way to go. So yes, Eco because it's a buzz word, but more significantly it's a question of energy costs. Because at the end of the day the energy bills are going to double over the next few years so that's what's important.

So where are you now?

■ Still in the startup stage. The BRE house is near completion. We have secured sites in England and we think we've secured some in Scotland.

>> CONT. NEXT PAGE

INTERVIEW WITH AN ENTERPRISE

We have social housing pension funding for a billion pounds to build houses in the UK. We have AppleGreen America. Just kicked off in California which is good. AppleGreen Asia next year. AppleGreen Middle East probably next year. And Brazil and India are on the cards too. We work under a kind of license arrangement. We license out the designs, the supply chain, the brand, and in the UK, the funding as well. So it's a turnkey solution. It saves the companies from doing R&D for two years. It saves them time and money. For each project there are usually three parties: us - with the designs, the R&D, the solution - then there is the constructor, and thirdly, the funder.

So what's your 5 year plan?

■ We think we'll be doing 100,000 house per year within five years. That's the plan. Because we are selling the license we don't need to get involved in employing labour, planning etc. With the crisis in the construction industry around the world, companies are looking for contracts. With a license agreement they get the all the research, the value chain, the plans and that helps them get work more easily because they can start straight away. And it allows us to grow without additional capital. And the brand has big labels on board now. LG, working with us globally.

Renault working with us globally. And there are others in the pipeline.

And do you envisage working with GCU in the future or have they given you the base you need?

■ No, our feeling is that we will always work with Universities. We are now part of ETP, the Energy Transfer Partnership which involves 12 universities and we'll look to partner universities in the countries we are working in. We'll always need an R&D arm to ensure we remain at the forefront of the modular or "modern methods of construction" sector.

So finally, this project is about employability. How do you see the current state of education in terms of the employability of our graduates?

■ We've already looked for graduate employees in Scotland and we've been really disappointed with the result because they're just not ready for the work place. I could give you concrete examples... There seems to be a lack of work experience and also the course doesn't set them up to be fit for the workplace. I'll give you a prime example. I was looking for a graduate to do accounts and bookkeeping and interviewed a student with a First Class Honours degree, that's the top 5%. I asked him about the VAT returns and he told me he hadn't studied that. Unbelievable. And that's not the first time we've interviewed people and they're not fit for the work place. It's quite shocking actually. Even here at GCU... We're just finishing the BRE house and we were looking for students from Interior Design. Because I work



Alan with Scotland's First Minister, Alec Salmond.

with an ex CEO from Saatchi and Saatchi, and the project is going to go worldwide, we approached the students to see if they wanted to work on the project. They would need to work for free as most people do on the park, but the experience working with a global brand would be invaluable. But not one student wanted to do it. It just seems so strange that they're not willing to take a risk, take an opportunity. My colleague from Saatchi and Saatchi was stunned.

What would you do to change this situation?

■ I think there should be work placement from day one. The twelve hour week should be abolished. They should shorten the courses if necessary. To get them into a more full time working mentality. The endgame should be that the students have experience to work. If a graduate comes out with a degree in accountancy but without a knowledge of doing a VAT return, there must be a problem. That's what needs to be looked at. Getting the skills that actually prepare them for work. And students need to be told, if they get an opportunity out there, they need to take it.



Lifelong
Learning
Programme



<http://www.gadget-project.eu>



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.