

1. PREAMBLE

In less than fifteen years, the European Union has demonstrated that its existence is valuable not only to member countries but also to the global community of nations. Therefore, one can expect that the Union will continue to grow externally and integrate internally.

While in the past at the core of EU concerns were economic and political factors (elimination of trade barriers, introduction of a single currency, the European Constitution, etc.), it is quite obvious that in the future, among the priorities of the EU will be educational and research issues.

As it is structured, the EU is committed to preserve, promote and protect the cultural and linguistic identities of its member countries. Yet, at the same time, has to promote transnational objectives, especially in the area of research along with institutions of higher learning located in strategic areas of the Union, serving the needs of the surrounding countries. One would expect that these institutions would offer programs in EU administration, EU laws, economic social and ethnic issues promoting unity in diversity where in the past interethnic hatred was breathing conflicts misconceptions and wars. It is with this in mind that at the time of the accession of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union on May 1, 2004 a Planning Committee of representatives from Nova Gorica (Slovenia) and Gorizia (Italy) was established, with the specific objective to propose to the Administration and Parliament of the EU the creation of the first University chartered by the Union. To this end, the Planning Committee has obtained the full support of the local and regional governments from both sides of the border with some financial support from local businesses.

2. HISTORIC AND GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Since ancient times, the region of Gorizia – Nova Gorica is known as the “Door of nations” because at the foot-hills of the Vipava Valley, is the easiest mountain-pass leading to East and Central Europe. Roman armies were using this valley to conquer the lands across the Alps up to present day Roumania.

.Not far from Gorizia , by the Adriatic sea, the Romans built the city of Aquileia; at that time, after Rome, was the second largest city on the Italian peninsula, a booming city a staging post for their armies and commercial activities. It was destroyed by Attila’s army that came from the East by using the Vipava valley mountain-pass. The same pass was used again by the Longobards and many other tribes that invaded Rome.

With the Alps on the North and the Friulan plains on the South, Gorizia – Nova Gorica area has a natural setting to develop into a major urban area. The climate is mild with the Adriatic sea 20 minutes away and the Alps 45 minutes to the North. Venice (built after Aquileia’s fall), is 110 km. to the South. The road network with the recently completed roadways is excellent. Croatia can be reached in 1.30 hr. Hungary in 3.30 hr. Austria in 2 hr. There is a regional airport 20 min. from Gorizia, the Venice airport 1.15 hr.(See Exhibit 1)

Only political factors typical of all frontier cities prevented the area from developing into a major urban center. The elimination of political borders between the Italian Gorizia and Slovenian Nova Gorica will give the region (since ancient times) a new opportunity to develop its potential within the European Union.

3. POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE REGION

Within the European Union it is hard to find a region that, in the last 100 years suffered more hatred, destruction, loss of lives, humiliations than the Gorizia-Nova Gorica region. By the end of World War I, on the mountain slopes and valleys, over 1,000,000 soldiers lost their lives. Hundreds of cemeteries are scattered throughout the region. Some with a few hundred tombs, others with 20,000 (Caporetto-Kobarid) ,50,000 (Ossario-Oslavje) and even 200,000 remains (Redipuglia). These conscripts came from 25 European nations including Italians, Germans, Austrians, Czechs, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Poles, Bulgarians, Roumanians, Slovenes, Croats, Bosnians, Macedonians, Serbs, and even Russians, their young lives lost for purely political reasons; today we wonder why!

The unjust borders that were subsequently established by the victorious governments, brought new misery to the region. With the annexation of over 400,000 Slovenians to Italy, the fascist regime ostracized their human rights as a minority. The Slovenian language was banned from public places. Thousands were deported, while an equal number of Italians were brought in from other regions of Italy. A good number, mostly professionals fled to Yugoslavia. Those who wanted to establish a business or applied for office jobs, had to change their family names to Italian sounding names

During World War II, under the Nazi occupation the region was terrorized not only by the Nazi and Fascist armies, but also by partisan incursions, an army of Cossacks allied with the Germans, chetniks from Yugoslavia. Entire villages were destroyed and the populations sent to hard labor or concentration camps in Germany.

At the end of World War , new political borders were drawn, cutting the city of Gorizia in half, one part was left in Italy the other (mostly northern suburbs) was given to Communist Yugoslavia. Again, tens of thousands of people left the area, many never to return back.(See Exhibit II)

It is only last year, when an independent and democratic Slovenia joined the European Union on May 1 2004, that a new future, a new era seems to be opening up for these populations. Yet, hatred, fears, produced by so many years of various dictatorships and persecutions require new and bold decisions. Even though the political leadership of the two cities promotes reconciliation, and joint efforts to bring peace to the area, the hearts and minds of so many people on both sides of the border are uncertain about their future, still skeptical about life without fear and hatred. This area needs direct and bold involvement of the European Union with innovative approaches. It is in this region that will be determined the long range objectives of the European Union.

4. PLANNING ACTIVITY

A 12 member Planning Committee was established shortly before Slovenia joined the European Union, with representatives from both sides of the border between Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica (Slovenia), including the heads of University Consortiums from Gorizia (Polo Universitario) and Nova Gorica (VIRS-Visokosolsko in Raziskovalno Sredisce).

It became obvious that a project of such complexity would require a strong support not only from the local and regional authorities but also from national and international representatives. The Mayors of the local border communities, Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Sempeter-Vrtojba, signed a trilateral Letter of Protocol in support of the project and presented it to the then President of the European Commission Romano Prodi when he came to Gorizia -Nova Gorica, to celebrate the entry of Slovenia to the European Union. While

Dr. Prodi is openly supporting the project, he felt that, with his term ending, would be better to wait until the new EU administration becomes operative.

The President of Slovenia Dr. Janez Drnovsek offered his patronage to the project. Shortly we expect the same from the President of Italy Carlo A. Ciampi and the Presidents of Croatia, Hungary and Austria. (the city of Gorizia – Nova Gorica was part of the Austrian Empire for over 400 years). The Pan-European movement, at its recent annual meeting in Munich, gave its wholehearted support to the project and offered its good offices.

Our Slovenian Euro-parliamentarians are aware of the project and will lobby for it. Similar support is forthcoming from the Italian counterparts. Mr. Vittorio Prodi, during his recent visit to Gorizia, was appraised of the project and offered his full support. Similar support is given by the Presidents-Rectors of the nearby universities of Trieste, Udine (Italy), Ljubljana, Koper (Slovenia), Rijeka, Zagabria (Croatia).

Obviously, the present list of promoters, at various levels will be substantially increased once the existing planning committee will have the opportunity of a feedback from the European Commission.

Planning Committee Members:

Dr. Karl Bonutti, Professor Emeritus, Former Ambassador of Slovenia to the Holy See

Dott. Alessandro Bertani, Consultant, Projects Manager, Polo Universitario

Ing. Nicolo Fornasir, President, Polo Universitario di Gorizia, President, Tecnogetti

Prof. Oskar Kogoj, World renown artist of form design

Dott. Alessandra Martina, Consultant, Professor Storiographer

Dr. Branko Marusic, Professor at Univ. Polytechnic, Research Advisor Slovenian Academy

Mag. Boris Nemec, Director, Strategic Planning, HIT Corp.

Dott. Marco Plesnicar, Secretary, Polo Unoriziaiversitario di G

Mag. Uros Saksida, Director, VIRS-Center for Academic Programs and Research

Mr. Josko Strukelj, Former Mayor of N. Gorica, Minister and Vice Governor, Central Bank of Yugoslavia

Dott. Sergio Tavano, Professor of Art History, University of Trieste

Mr. Branko Tomazic, President and CIO, HIT Corp.

5. PROPOSED UNIVERSITY STRUCTURE

The Planning Committee envision a EU University that offers academic programs promoting an European rather than national view of educational activities conform to the basic tenets expressed by the European Parliament. As such would not compete but rather complement the academic programs of national universities

In the free world, universities are staunch supporters of academic freedoms, without political or other form of outside interference. Yet, most great universities were established by governments, church denominations, and even businesses by promoting certain philosophical viewpoints or value systems, however without interfering in the teaching process of academic subjects. The same is expected from the EU University. With global economies, technological innovations, young generations of students should be exposed to broader perspectives to effectively communicate and compete globally, substitute national perspectives with international viewpoints. This should be the role of the EU University.

As we perceive, the EU Commissioner on Education would introduce to the European Parliament a proposal to establish an EU University and request a Charter approval. The EU Commissioner would appoint an Academic Board of leading European academic administrators to review and recommend from a list of applicants a President-Rector for the

newly chartered EU University. The President-Rector would submit to the EU Commissioner, for his approval (upon advice of the Academic Board) any new Programs.

Faculty members would be selected from all EU countries based on proven academic excellence. Similarly, students would be enrolled from all EU countries, but mostly from East and Central Europe

The official language would be English, with French and German as options.

The initial activity of the University could start as a “satellite” center for training programs in EU administrative positions for applicants from East and Central Europe. Later, regular Faculties would be established in Law (EU legislation), Social Sciences (Minorities and Ethnic Studies, Regional Economic Growth) Government and EU Administration, Languages, Theological studies (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox), Engineering Design, Operations Research, Incubation of new Businesses, programs that are most useful for Countries entering the EU.

The proposed EU University could use, at least temporarily the facilities of the impressive building near the border between Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica (Slovenia) where the University of Trieste has its own International School of Diplomacy (See photo).

6. EXISTING PROGRAMS OF HIGHER LEARNING

Within a 50 km. radius from Gorizia – Nova Gorica are internationally known several institutions of Higher Learning like:

University of Trieste

University of Udine

University of Koper

Center for Theoretical Physics “Abdus Salaam”

The Synrotrone

The School for International Management

The Institute of Marine Biology

The Astronomic Observatory “Hack”

The Polytechnic

Etc

7. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The local governments – the Municipalities of Gorizia (Italy), Nova Gorica and Sempeter – Vrtojba (Slovenia) are committed to make available the necessary land facilities and buildings for the proposed EU University. A famous protected park owned by the city of Nova Gorica with a Villa Rafut owned by the Slovenian Government next to the Italian border, could serve at least temporarily for administrative activities.

The major source of financial support however, should be the European Union. The Planning Committee will seek financial support from the largest Foundations and Corporation, once the European Commission will have a chance to review and evaluate the proposal and hopefully approve its basic components.