

OPENING SPEECH

Staffan Mellvig

*National Agency for Higher Education
Presented by Professor William Hogland*

The cooperation within the field of higher education in the Baltic region have from Swedish side several actors. Besides bilateral cooperation financed by I e the Swedish Institute and SIDA there is a multilateral cooperation going on in the framework of the European Union program Tempus. Tempus is the program for higher education cooperation within the EU-programmes PHARE, Poland, Hungarian Aid for Reconstruction Economic Situation, and TACIS, Technical Assistance to Soviet states and Mongolia, which are the EU programs for economic and social reconstruction of the Central- and East European countries respectively the former Soviet union states and Mongolia. The main goal for tempus is to strengthen the higher education system in these countries.

Swedish partners started to participate in the Tempus program already before Sweden became a member of the European union. The Swedish participation within Tempus has been financed by the Ministry of Education to Tempus Sweden and the National Agency for Higher Education. Sweden has until now participated in or participates in a couple of hundred project within Tempus. About 50 MSEK have been allocated from Tempus Sweden to multilateral projects, contract travels, pilot projects, strategic projects mobility exchange of students and teachers and financing of seminars, conferences and courses.

Swedish partners are active in Tempus-project with 10 of the 13 Phare-countries. Most active have they been in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and the Czech republic. The from the Swedish side most interesting Tacis-countries are beside Russia, Ukraine, Armenia and Mongolia.

The most central goal for Tempus Sweden is that in different ways support an increased multilateral institutional cooperation within the higher education field, between Sweden , the other EU-countries, the Phare- and Tacis countries. The cooperation should have a long-term perspective and play a strategic role. This can be done in different multilateral networks.

A very important step to take is to use the universities as hubs for regional development and to link them with small and medium size enterprises. Sweden has a useful knowledge within this field.

It is of great importance to find structures for cooperation, projects and for keeping networks of contacts alive.

To facilitate all this cooperation and to create platforms; "communication islands", Tempus Sweden is building a number of Swedish Centres in Russia (Volga-Vjatka-området), Armenia, Ukraine and Bulgaria but so far not in the Baltic region. These Swedish Centres shall facilitate and promote cooperation, within the higher education field, within the field of research and development, to link university activities to small and medium sized enterprises and within the field of culture. Each Swedish Centre shall have computers with Internet connection, fax, copy machines, computers for

guests, exhibition localities where all Swedish universities and university collages can present their own education. The Centres shall also have local academician as an assistant running the activities.

Now when the Tempus program is changing for the period year 2000-2006 and will not be available for partners from the countries that have applied for EU-membership it will be of crucial importance to take care of the already reached good results.

It is important to give the multilateral cooperation networks the opportunities to proceed with the institutional cooperation. Both bilateral and multilateral (EU) financing should be used in a way so that they strengthen each other and not in a way that they compete.