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Half a century of Faculty of Economics and Management in Nitra

The 20th century in Slovakia was characterized by a quantitative development of university education. A rising interest in university study, a changing structure of careers, a growth of social prestige and growing requirements on qualified economic management created the space for the existence of new educational institutions.

1959 was a historical year in our university's calendar; the year when PEF /Faculty of Operation and Economics/ was founded and it was oriented to agricultural, economic and management sciences. The established faculty has changed from its modest beginnings into presently one of the six biggest faculties of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra and one of the recognized economic-managerial faculties in the Slovak Republic.

A 50-year-long tradition of the faculty can be characterized by particular periods of development in which the institution went through deep internal changes. Originally the Faculty of Operation and Economics was constituted on the basis of two departments of former Faculty of Zoo-technology, namely Department of Agricultural Economics and Department of Organization of Socialistic Agricultural Enterprises. Educational activities from the very beginning have been oriented to upbringing of professionals in agriculture – operation economists and in academic year 1974/75 a new study branch – Automatic Systems of Management was developed. After 1989 in accordance with social changes, essential changes were made regarding the content and organization in university education. New study programs and specializations were broadened with the aim to improve the quality of upbringing the graduates and thus raise their competitiveness in a developing labor market. In 1997 the original Faculty of Operation and Economics was transformed into the present Faculty of Economics and Management, which name describes more precisely its educational work.

Since its foundation the faculty has educated more than 14 thousand graduates who, by their professional and human qualities, represent the faculty at various managing and other demanding positions, not only all over the country but also abroad.

Presently the Faculty of Economics and Management has more than 2 500 students at bachelor, master and doctoral studies. Their professional profile is formed by 11 departments within 8 bachelor study programs (Business Economy, Business Management, Business Trade, Accountancy, Quantitative Methods in Economics, International Trade with Agrarian Commodities, Economics and Management in Agrisector, Teaching of Professional Agricultural Subjects), 4 master programs (Business Economics, Agrarian Trade and Marketing, Quantitative Methods in Economy, Economics and Management in Agrisector) and 2 doctoral study programs (Business Economy and Management, Sectorial and Cross-sectorial Economics). With pleasure we can state, that nowadays the faculty has been an inseparable part of Nitra's town and Nitra's region for a half a century of its existence and thanks to its professional activities, it is acknowledged by professionals and public in the whole Slovakia and also abroad. Professional contacts, which our faculty maintains and there from arising international reputation, lie in organization of scientific events recently organized not only at the domestic ground of the faculty but also abroad, in cooperation with prestigious professional and academic institutions (FAO workshop 2004, Curtea de Arges, Romania 2007 in cooperation with University of Economy, Kyjev, Ukraine 2008 in cooperation with National University of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Krakow, Poland

2009 in cooperation with Agricultural University in Krakow), participation in international scientific and educational projects (6RP, 7RP, Erasmus, Leonardo, CEEPUS, Grundtvig, ASO, International Vysegrad Fund), scientific activities of students and intensive academic mobilities of teachers. Employees of the faculty successfully participate in grant projects organized by The Slovak Ministry of Education and institutional research, whose results are used in teaching, publishing and advisory activities for their professional field.

At the beginning of 21st century the question of the content and quality of university study arose. Our faculty did not avoid this question. It is assumed that universities, as the highest part of educational system, will become the main support of producing, maintaining and offering theoretical and scientific knowledge. It comes out of its traditional functions which have been changing due to social relations which are globalization, permanently sustainable development and European integration. The whole history of the faculty, from its foundation up to the present times, has been marked by permanent quantitative and qualitative changes which significantly influence the character and the face of the faculty. Mainly in the 90's and at the turn of the 21st century, there was a very strong demand for the reconstruction of its educational content connected with modularization and credit systems of assessment. Attention has been paid mainly to the development of key competences of the graduates through team work, individual assignments and problem solving tasks, improving language and computer skills.

Regarding more intensive and effective enrollment in a long-life education in European education space, a prompter reaction to calls for international educational and scientific research, three more centers were added to the Information Technology Centre at the Faculty of Economics and Management, as individual specialized places, and that is the Center of EU programs, Long-life Education Centre and Centre of Excellence.

The nearest and also further perspective of the faculty will mainly depend on the knowledge we can provide to our graduates. Its quality will be determined by new ways of teaching, conditions of education, new approaches in evaluation and innovation of curriculum. In accordance with the demand of our present labor market and internationalization of economic life, at the beginning of academic year 2007/2008 we launched a new English study program (Bachelor program – International business in Agrarian Commodities) and since the academic year 2008/2009 we launched a pilot year of international Master study of V4 countries in Business Economy program (in cooperation with SGGW Warsaw, Poland, CZU Prague, the Czech Republic and University of St. Stefan in Godollo, Hungary). In the academic year 2009/2010 we are planning to launch MBA study "Agribusiness and Commerce" in cooperation with University in Wageningen, Holland. The faculty organized language teaching to teachers due to support the teaching professional subjects in English language and some of them successfully passed Unicert exam and the others have still been preparing for it. In cooperation with Slovenská sporiteľňa, a.s, there will be a new study room opened, equipped with literature about economy which is aimed to raise the qualitative level of conditions for teaching in English.

During half century of its existence, FEM has built a wide professional background out of the number of employees, graduates and excellent students who create the basis of the future positive changes. Therefore, we believe that due to well conceived study programs and high professionalism, our auditoriums will never be half-empty and unused.

Dr.h.c prof. Ing. Peter Bielik, PhD.
Dean of Faculty of Economics and Management