

THE EURAC MODEL FOR ARMENIA

Investing in Education

After the downfall of the Soviet Union many European nations worried about the future of the scientists in the CIS (commonwealth of independent states) countries. Therefore International and National research programs were developed to help the CIS states.

The INTAS project (www.intas.be) is an international association formed by EU member states and others to promote East-West Scientific cooperation. The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF: WWW.SNF.CH) started the SCOPES (Scientific cooperation for Eastern Europe) Program for the years 2000-2003, and a grant was given to coordinate a program on East-West migration for the CIS states Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Russia.

Education for future success

Last month I visited Eriwan, the capital of Armenia, for the purpose of promoting our research project. To overcome the economic problems many so-called transition states are now facing the decision to invest in education. I was informed by the co-workers of our project that many new private universities and other continuing education programs have been founded in the last years. The government encourages private initiative in research and education since it considers the education sector to be the best investment for the future.

How surprised was I to find out that there exists an unexpected link to Bolzano/Bozen. It is European Academy of the Caucasus region which was

organisational know-how.

So what else has Bolzano/Bozen in common with Eriwan? There is the inauguration of the new location of the Eriwan Academy on October 4th. This is almost a coincidence with the official opening of the Bolzano/Bozen academy on Sept. 13. The Eriwan Academy has a spectacular view to the two peaks of the Ararat Mountain, the holy mountain of the Armenians. While located on the border just within Turkey the Ararat overlooks the plains of the Arax river where the capital Eriwan is built.

A characteristic of Eriwan is the reddish Tuff stone which is used all over Armenia as build-

ing material. This gives the city a constant flow of warmth especially at sunset.

Why EURAC of Bolzano/Bozen?

I asked Dr. Baghdasaryan, the new director the Caucasus Academy what makes the EURAC Academy in Bolzano/Bozen so attractive for Armenia? "It is the broad range of activities which will be brought together under one roof he explained. Next to vocational training (together with WIFI and BFI in Vienna) there will be courses on technical oriented studies (in cooperation with TU Berlin and the East-West Bavarian education center OWZ-Bayern) and economic and ma-

nagement studies with Lyon and the French university in Armenia (FUA). A course in design is in the planning stage and tuition will be multilingual as at the University of Bolzano/Bozen.

"All the best for the inauguration of EURAC in Bolzano" Mr. Baghdasaryan says when he had to leave for a meeting with a delegation with European parliamentarians, since he is a member of the Armenian parliament: There he will also mention EURAC, a model in education made in Südtirol. •

Prof. W. Polasek,

Free University
of Bolzano/Bozen

created following the model of the Bolzano/Bozen EURAC.

Armenian parliamentarians have decided to make their country ready for the 21 st century. As a small country in the Transkaukasus without natural resources the politicians decided to invest in education to become competitive in new branches of economics.

Low income, but old traditions

Armenia is a poor country with an average income of about 55 \$. Nevertheless Armenia started to sell the new education concepts to their neighbouring countries. Despite language and religious differences many minorities and other population groups now come to Eriwan for their university studies. Although they have to study a new language and the Armenian alphabet they prefer to study in a quite and safe environment.

Armenian being the first country having adopted Christianity as a state religion back in 301, education and religion has been a backbone of the society since then. The pope visited the oldest existing church in Etchmiadsin on the occasion for the 1700-year celebration. In the war with the Turks and Muslim countries many Armenian left their country creating the Armenian Diaspora. In recent years it was the stony road of being a transition economy that made about 900'000 out of 3.7 Armenians to leave their country.

Education against brain-drain

The brain drain has to be counter-balanced and an obvious answer is higher education including vocational training. But also the possibility to enhance tourism will be explored. In both areas EURAC in's Bolzano/Bozen has been asked to be a partner for