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University of Economics, Prague and IBM establish New Competence Centre: Students' Opportunity in Smarter Commerce

The Faculty of Informatics and Statistics, University of Economics, Prague (VŠE) and IBM Czech Republic are going to establish a new competence centre. The cooperation has been officially confirmed by a memorandum signed this week by Vladek Šlezinger, CEO IBM Czech Republic, and Luboš Marek, the Dean of the Faculty.

Prague, 21 June 2012

The very first Smarter Commerce centre in the Czech Republic will allow students to partake in real-life business and research projects during the course of their studies and, in doing so, gain valuable experience. The cooperative project is designed as a sophisticated form of symbiosis of an academic institution and a commercial organization that supports creation of communities of excellence, growth of a competitive workforce, development of the society through innovative use of technology, long-term sustainability and financial independence.

“Abroad, the concept of competence centres has been a great success and we are very happy to be at its first implementation at the University of Economics in Prague. We believe these centres will provide students with a much-needed insight into the professional practice that awaits them after their studies,” added Harry van Dorenmalen, Chairman of IBM Europe, at the signing event where he introduced the strategic concept of cooperation between universities and commercial entities along with several examples from abroad.

The concept of Smarter Commerce is based on implementation of tools that serve for customer analysis, prediction of customer's behaviour, and solutions that enable processing of ever-growing amount of data and facilitate their interpretation. The new competence centre will focus on three thematic areas of smarter commerce.

The first area focuses on systems quality management and their critical area identification – focusing on a comprehensive approach to functionality and performance testing and system automation. The second area is dedicated to business intelligence and analytical tools – data needs to be transformed into information and information must be contextualized to gain insights, all the while data volumes continue to grow exponentially. And finally, the third area concentrates on collaborative tools for a more efficient communication and information exchange among clients, partners and employees – boosting productivity, stimulating innovation and decreasing costs.



PRESS RELEASE

“We see IBM as an innovative partner that spearheads development in many fields of technology. The concept of Smarter Commerce is an example of IBM’s visionary approach. An approach we can not only help develop and further, but one we can also introduce to our students to prepare and win them for its implementation,” said Ota Novotný, competence centre leader at the Faculty of Informatics and Statistics, VŠE.

For many years now, tertiary education has been lacking adequate interconnection with the professional world – a drawback that eventually affects the graduates who often struggle to find employment due to their lack of professional experience. The new competence centre at VŠE aims to support the interconnection of academic world with private sector and scientific research. VŠE was inspired by similar smarter commerce competence centres successfully operating in other countries. One of these centres has been realized at Plekhanov Russian Economic University in Moscow where both students and professors research business intelligence. One of the existing IBM competence centres in the Czech Republic is already operating at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering of the Czech Technical University in Prague and focuses on process management. In the coming years, IBM plans to introduce competence centres at other Czech universities. Bachelor’s, Master’s and doctoral degree students will have an opportunity to gain knowledge and experience thanks to the interconnectedness of schools across the Czech Republic and abroad.

About Competence Centres

A competence centre is a group of people at a university with a clearly defined orientation and a common interest in gaining knowledge in the given area, developing professional skills through work on practicable projects and creating unique know-how in the chosen area. Competence centres support the development of top talents, creation of communities of excellence, knowledge sharing among schools and finally, they also increase the prestige of the involved institutions. The aim of a competence centre is to aid the development and enhancement of competitiveness of all participating parties and improve the quality of tertiary education by connecting it with professional practice.

About Smarter Commerce

Smarter commerce recognizes that the sale is just one aspect of the experience. As with traditional commerce, the customer is at the centre of all operations. Smarter commerce turns customer insight into action, enabling new business processes that help companies buy, market, sell and service their products and services.

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The University of Economics, Prague (Vysoká škola ekonomická v Praze) is the leading university in the field of management and economics in the Czech Republic. The University of Economics, Prague is composed of more than 20,000 students and has six faculties – five in Prague and one in Jindřichův Hradec in South Bohemia. These include: the Faculty of Finance and Accounting, the Faculty of International Relations, the Faculty of Business Administration, the Faculty of Statistics and Informatics and the Faculty of Economics and Public Administration. The faculty based in Jindřichův Hradec is specialized in management. Graduates of the University of Economics, Prague occupy responsible positions in the private as well as in the public sector. Most of them are employed in the sectors of industry and services, trade, marketing, banking, public administration, accounting, audit, tourism and the field of information technology. Many significant Czech and foreign economists have obtained the University's honoris causa title; for example, the Nobel Prize winner Prof. Robert A. Mundell, Prof. Milton Friedman and Prof. Gary S. Becker. More information at <http://www.vse.cz/index-en.php>.

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