

# Report

**May 15-17, 2015**

**Novi Sad, Serbia**

**Faculty of Technical Sciences,**

University of Novi Sad

21000 Novi Sad

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**Soft Skills Academy**  
FOSTERING STUDENTS' ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
AND OPEN INNOVATION IN UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY  
COLLABORATION

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**iDEA**lab

## Soft Skills Academy, Novi Sad

Soft Skills Academy took place in Novi Sad, Serbia, during May 15-17, 2015. iDEALab project team was involved in organization and development of this event along the main organizers EESTEC (Electrical Engineering Students' European Association) Local Committee Novi Sad and many professional consultants, trainers and professors from Faculty of Technical Sciences Novi Sad and University of Novi Sad who are partners on the iDEALab project as well. Soft skills academy is a project where 30 best students from the entire University of Novi Sad have a great opportunity to improve themselves both on the personal and professional level through soft skills trainings, which were held by representatives of respected successful companies. Students had a chance to participate trainings that otherwise they wouldn't because they are not still officially integrated in our learning system within the university as these skills are non-job-specific, broadly applicable and usually hard to measure. After the project all the participants were given certificates that are officially acknowledged by companies who attended soft skills academy.

Main focus of the workshop was on:

- Introducing students to various soft skills
- Improving their behaviour and personality including a variety of abilities, attitudes and personality traits
- Reinforcing competencies in soft skills which are crucial to a workplace in order to improve the integration of individuals, especially in disadvantaged situation
- Promoting lifelong learning, cooperation between generations and volunteering
- Rising the awareness of the necessity of developing soft skills
- Supporting the development of innovative technological methods of education

Soft Skills Academy brought together:

- 4 different companies and their representatives as trainers
- iDEALab project team members as trainers
- Media
- Faculty of Technical Sciences Novi Sad
- University of Novi Sad
- IT Girls , Novi Sad
- EESTEC LC Novi Sad and people from iDEALab

Soft skills gained through this academy are especially helpful to young entrepreneurs since these skills usually come with a lot of experience while working on various projects with a large group of people. Participants are more prepared for the challenges in front of them and it's easier for them to start their own business or join someone else's if they know how to properly manage their time, their projects, and people they are working with.



Soft Skills Academy lasted for three days and these are one of the main issues considered:

**Introduction to Soft Skills** was held by Jelena Kovač, Human Resources Leader in company Execom that was one of the partners on this project. She told her story about her beginnings, how she learned things that participants will learn during this project, about how important is to always work and improve ourselves.

**Workshop: Time management** was held by Tijana Sretković and Daniela Červeni. These two who work for two influential IT companies in Novi Sad, conveyed the knowledge on how to better organize one's time within a given time-frame. Time management is one of the fundamental skills that every person should implement in their professional, as well as, personal life. The participants showed interest in improving themselves in this area and they gave their personal suggestions from situations that they have experienced.

**Workshop: Presentations skills** was also held by Tijana Sretković and Daniela Červeni. As we all know, the most important aspect in the business perspective, is how to present your ideas, your work and yourself and on this workshop, participants had opportunity to practice presenting a fictive idea in front of a make-shift crowd of people. This environment helped the participants to come to a singular conclusion and understanding of the importance of good presentation in their every-day lives. Each participant had different point of view what good presentation can be perceived as, but in the end, they found common ground on which they can build up their experience on.



**Workshop: Assertive communication** was held by Petar Vrgović, professor on the Faculty of technical sciences. On this workshop participants grasped the importance of saying NO and what is best way to convey this message to the party on the other side of the message. There are different kinds of people, so, there are different ways on how to present your answer, and that is why people were introduced to various ways and methods of doing so. This influential professor made such an impact on the participants that they started practicing immediately after the workshop. The feedback after the workshop was most reassuring and it gave both the professor and organizers valuable input into further developing and improvement for conveying knowledge in the field of assertive communication.

**Workshop: Stress management** was organized by Rodoljub Obreščanin. Today it is very important to understand the health risks associated to stress. During this workshop the student-participants learned on basic sources of stress that one can come across in their daily and professional life. Also, these participants learned of various methods in how to deal with and control stress. The main conclusion was that stress abbreviates from ourselves and our perception of the situation that we are in. Participants were given a chance to exercise handling stress through improvised situations in a working environment and we believe that they have gained valuable insight in the right methods of stress control.



**Workshop: Channels of communication** was delivered by Jelena Kovač. This interesting workshop had it's main goal in explaining to the participants the fundamentals in communication both through hierarchy and different cultures. It was discussed, for example, whether an email is the appropriate ice-breaker in initiating communication with plausible business partners, or is it acceptable to call the other party after the working hours. Of course, it was concluded that different cultures have different understandings of what is appropriate in communication and thus participants learned to respect the differences. The participants had the working session on brainstorming in which they came up with ideas to bridge the inconsistencies that different cultures can have in communication.