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Visiting learning laboratory of PBL tutorial

Last PMB in Maastricht University has provided useful chance for some of us to deliberate on the current stage of INOTLES project implementation, looking at the near future plans and discussing other important issues. Moreover, we have a chance of visiting some tutorials, provided with two our Colleagues – Victoria and Heidi Maurer. Both of them were really useful in order to understand better how the Problem based learning functions in real learning process. The topic of the tutorial is being devoted to European Parliament and European Commission.

First tutorial has shown a meaning of a good leadership in the group of students. The student who served as a chair really run effectively the tutorial, regarding point by point the issues of the topic, leaving minimum room for the tutor interventions. Only if students have been facing with unresolved problem and nobody of them were able to find out the right answer, the tutor provided certain aid to them. The whole group cooperated all the time and I would like to stress the positive social climate there. Nevertheless, three students have been stuck in their laptops and showed minor interest towards the topic itself and deliberations of their peers.

Second tutorial has been marked with another disposition of the tutor and students activity. The chair of the tutorial happened to be less energetic and encouraging students towards active participation. To an extent that deficit of a strong leadership has been compensated with the secretary, who not only made notes of the discussion but also tried to enflame student's activity. In general tutor had to intervene more regularly that it would be expected on a case of more energetic chairing. The stronger feature of the second group discussion seems to be students' attraction to the provocative, complicated and directly related to practical policy issues of European Parliament and European Commission competences and functions.

Both tutorials end up with a period of pre-discussion on the new topic and midterm reflections on the group work. The latter went out with mixed outcome. Some students complain that texts are too complicated and burdened them with too much theory, while other evaluated texts as too easy to read. The major part of students

who raised their voice in the reflections period estimated quite positive both the group work and tutor's contributions.

Comparing two tutorials I may suggest that the impact of students' engagement onto the group work and group dynamic is of crucial importance. Where the chair and secretary are concerned with a outcome of their roles and group advancement they contribute a lot in making the tutorial a success story. In the same time, there are equal problems for both groups I observed that day. The number of shy or inactive students happened to be quite the same, and those students did not say a word for all tutorial time. Obviously, they partook in the tutorial passively, seemed to be prepared (keeping some papers and notes, done earlier) but they did not dare entering the discussion anyhow. Both tutors tried to encourage these students to go ahead. For instance, Heidi invited them to speak on the problems of their activity and contribution into group work after the end of tutorial and as I could see they appreciated her comments and suggestions very much.

In general, both tutorials helped me to access much better pros and cons of PBL, making some conclusion that this method of active learning as fruitful as creative one. It makes students and University teacher's true and responsible partners, granting them with more opportunities as well as challenging them with intensive and demanding work.