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The "MATCH" project – cooperation between universities, local government and business for the development of entrepreneurship and creativity in Lublin – part 2 (analysis of research results and development opportunities)

Projekt "MATCH", czyli współpraca uczelni, samorządu i biznesu dla rozwoju przedsiębiorczości i kreatywności w Lublinie – część 2 (analiza wyników badań i szanse rozwoju)

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Abstract

Cooperation between universities and the socio-economic environment should be based on synergy, which will generate benefits for each party participating in the cooperation. Relationships that occur between universities, local government and business are often referred to as the model of mutual influence of the triple helix fields, within which entities cooperate with each other, interact, affect each other, coexist, and whose interests interpenetrate each other.

The aim of the article is to characterize and analyse cooperation implemented within MATCH initiative – a project that was launched by the Municipality of Lublin and has been implemented together with universities from Lublin – Maria Curie Skłodowska-University and University College of Enterprise and Administration in Lublin and with enterprises and public institutions. In the article the genesis of the project will be described,

as well as implemented activities. The functioning of the project will be assessed as well as perspectives for the future. The article is a practical supplement of a previously published theoretical article.

Keywords: cooperation, university, business, education, socioeconomic environment, partners, local government

Streszczenie

Współpraca uczelni z otoczeniem społeczno-gospodarczym powinna opierać się na synergii, która generować będzie korzyści dla każdej ze stron zaangażowanej w ten proces. Relacje pomiędzy uczelniami wyższymi, samorządem i biznesem często określa się mianem modelu wzajemnego oddziaływania pól potrójnej helisy. W ramach tej koncepcji podmioty współpracują ze sobą, wchodzą w interakcje, oddziałują na siebie, koegzystują, a ich interesy wzajemnie się przenikają.

Celem drugiego artykułu (praktycznego) jest dokonanie charakterystyki i analizy współpracy w ramach projektu "MATCH", realizowanego z inicjatywy Urzędu Miasta Lublin wraz z uczelniami wyższymi funkcjonującymi na terenie Lublina – Uniwersytetem Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej w Lublinie oraz Wyższą Szkołą Przedsiębiorczości i Administracji w Lublinie oraz firmami komercyjnymi i instytucjami publicznymi. W artykule przedstawione zostały: geneza projektu, zrealizowane działania, ocena funkcjonowania i perspektywy rozwoju na przyszłość. Opracowanie jest praktycznym dopełnieniem pierwszego artykułu teoretycznego.

Słowa kluczowe: współpraca, uczelnia, biznes, edukacja, otoczenie społeczno-gospodarcze, partnerzy, samorzad

Introduction

Collaboration between universities and the socio-economic environment should be founded on synergy that creates mutual benefits for all parties involved. The relationships established between higher education institutions, local authorities, and the business sector are often described through the triple helix model of mutual interaction, in which these entities cooperate, engage in dialogue, influence one another, coexist, and pursue overlapping interests.

The purpose of this article is to describe and analyse the cooperation undertaken as part of the MATCH initiative – a project launched by the Lublin City Hall in partnership with local higher education institutions, namely Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin and the University College of Enterprise and Administration in Lublin, along with private enterprises and public organizations. The article will

discuss the origins of the project, outline the actions implemented, provide an evaluation of its effectiveness, and consider the prospects for its future development.

The "MATCH" project as a response to the needs of students, entrepreneurs, and the City of Lublin

Origins and main assumptions of the "MATCH" project

As we read on the website Lublin.eu (Match, n.d.) the launch of the "MATCH" project is closely related to the Lublin 2030 Strategy. One of its development areas is "Creative, academic, and entrepreneurial Lublin", which means that priority is given to supporting the development of creativity, innovation, and relations between economic ecosystems. Lublin, being an academic city – where 9 higher education institutions operate – 5 public ones: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Lublin University of Technology, University of Life Sciences in Lublin, Medical University of Lublin, and John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin; and 4 non-public institutions: University College of Enterprise and Administration in Lublin, Vincent Pol University in Lublin, WSEI Lublin Academy, and the Academy of Social and Medical Sciences in Lublin – the Academy of Applied Sciences – cannot, in its development strategy, fail to connect the city's development goals without taking into account the participation and role of higher education institutions. According to official data from the Lublin City Hall (Potencjał edukacyjny miasta, n.d.), nearly 60,000 students study in the city (of which nearly 9,000 are foreign students from over 100 countries worldwide) – which places it in 7th position among cities that are seats of higher education institutions (after Warsaw, Kraków, Poznań, Wrocław, Łódź, and Gdańsk) (Debkowska et al., 2023). The universities operating in the city offer over 200 study programs, sending nearly 15,000 students to the labour market each year.

In order to give students and graduates of Lublin's universities – studying or completing education in creative fields – a better start on the labour market, and at the same time respond to the needs of entrepreneurs and local businesses, the City Hall launched the "MATCH" project. This initiative connects supply and demand – connecting students seeking experience with entrepreneurs looking for solutions that students can provide (MATCH, 2022).

The "MATCH" project is also embedded in the Lublin 2030+ Culture Strategy which is based on the *Lublin 2030 Strategy (Strategia Lublin 2030* – within the framework of the Regional Creative Industries Alliance (RCIA) project. Two analyses of the creative industries in Lublin were developed: *The Development Strategy of the Creative Industries Sector in Lublin and the Lublin Functional Area for the years 2020–2030* and *Analysis of the State of Creative Industries in Lublin (Strategia Kultury Lublin 2030*+, 2024). The foundation of the strategic thinking concept in the context of supporting the creative industries in Lublin was the aforementioned project "RCIA – Regional Creative Industries Alliance – from European recommendations

to regional strategies for increasing the competitiveness of creative and cultural industries". For the purposes of this project, the document Action Plan City of Lublin was developed. It assumed the implementation by the City of Lublin of several pilot actions aimed at supporting the creative sector, which were to be implemented in 2020– 2021. These activities included, among others, the implementation of the MATCH initiative as a program for cooperation between higher education institutions educating students in the CCI (Cultural and Creative Industries) areas and business. In the document prepared for the implementation of the "RCIA" project titled *The Development* Strategy of the Creative Industries Sector in Lublin and the Lublin Functional Area for the years 2020–2030 (Strategia rozwoju sektora przemysłów kreatywnych w Lublinie i Lubelskim Obszarze Funkcjonalnym na lata 2020–2030, 2020) we read that: "A solution that may provide significant support in the education process in terms of popularizing and building awareness about CCI (initiative 5), as well as promoting and building awareness about CCI among potential audiences (initiative 6), is the inclusion of the CCI concept in educational processes (at various levels: preschool, school, university). It is important to start building awareness and promoting CCI at the early stages of education" (Ibid.). MATCH, understood as the implementation of practical projects for business by students as part of university courses, was one of the proposed methods of promoting the CCI concept and incorporating it into the education process at the level of higher education institutions.

A good practice that Lublin implemented as part of the "RCIA" project was MATCH!, carried out for the first time in Italy. The inspiration for the idea related to implementing practical projects by students as part of classes conducted at universities was the "MATCH!" project, implemented in Italy in South Tyrol in September 2018. It is an example of good practice in the field of connecting potential participants of CCI (current students) with potential recipients of services offered by CCI participants (companies). It fulfils promotional and awareness-building tasks related to CCI among potential recipients. As part of the "MATCH!" program implemented in Italy in South Tyrol in September 2018, a project was launched during the winter semester of the 2018–2019 academic year at the Faculty of Design and Art of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano (UNIBZ). The project involved 15 students and 6 companies, and the goal was to develop 16 design ideas and new applications for the products offered by those companies (e.g., concrete garden furniture, lamps, kitchen equipment and accessories, modular furniture). Connecting students and companies made it possible, on the one hand, for students to gain new skills and competencies but also to apply the knowledge and abilities they already possessed, and on the other hand, it allowed the companies participating in the project to obtain new designs for their products, which may contribute to increasing their competitiveness and profitability.

The most important goal of the "MATCH" project is for students to gain experience in cooperation with business (reflecting real market cooperation conditions), and not in artificial "academic" environments. "MATCH" evolves over time – it is

not limited only to implementation diplomas. As part of the project, students carry out projects for companies as part of "course completion" within their studies under the supervision of a university lecturer responsible for the field/program. The origin of the "MATCH" project dates back to 2020, when the Department of Strategy and Entrepreneurship of the Lublin City Hall, together with the Faculty of Arts of UMCS in Lublin, offered entrepreneurs the opportunity to support their business activities through cost-free development – by students of the "Graphic Design" program (specialization in graphic design or multimedia) – of various projects as part of coursework and diploma theses tailored to the needs and expectations of the enterprises. Entrepreneurs, thanks to the "matching" activities, have the opportunity to get to know potential future employees and collaborators more closely and enrich the company with new solutions related, for example, to promotion and advertising. At this moment (as of March 2025), as part of the "MATCH" project, the City of Lublin is cooperating with the Faculty of Arts of UMCS in Lublin and the "Interior Design" program of WSPA in Lublin. Students participating in the project represent various specializations: graphic designers, interior designers, programmers, and animators. This allows for the combination of different specializations in some projects in order to more effectively meet the expectations of businesses regarding the final result. It is also important that the project has no restrictions regarding the target recipient – students' activities may be directed both to small businesses and large corporations, such as Orange or IKEA. In this context, "MATCH" is scalable to companies of any size (Match, n.d.).

What does the process of "MATCHING" companies with students look like?

It consists of several stages, which are presented below in graphic form.

The process begins with a conversation initiated by the City Hall with the university and company. During the meeting, the student's capabilities and the potential area of their involvement in developing a solution for the company are analysed.



In the next stage, a study visit of the studetns ant their supervisor to the company is carried out, during which they become more familiar with the initial conditions and obtain the basic information necessary to begin the project.



The next meeting involve the presentation of proposed solutions in order to obtain the company's approval. Depending on the company's capabilities, the project is either directed towards rapid implementation or postoponed due to specific conditions (e.g. obtaining external approvals). The entire project process is promoted on the social media channels of the university and the company.

Fig. 1. Stages of implementation of "MATCH" project

Source: own compilation basing on website: Match, n.d.

Cooperation within the "MATCH" project brings a number of benefits to the participating partners:

- Benefits for business: it offers the opportunity to collect multiple variants
 of attractive and innovative solution proposals (a fresh perspective from people outside the organization). Entrepreneurs are interested in unconventional
 and non-standard solutions that can increase the effectiveness and efficiency
 of their activities.
- 2. **Benefits for students:** they gain very valuable experience in developing solutions for business (they have the opportunity to work in a real business environment, facing real challenges).
- 3. General benefits for all stakeholders: the project is low-cost or often cost-free the only costs that may arise are those related to the company providing necessary materials, if the project requires them, and the cost of implementing the concept developed by the students. Moreover, the openness and willingness to cooperate between sectors: universities—business—local government is key to the success and scalability of the cooperation model. Agreements concluded as part of the project, or as a result of activities planned within the project, constitute an excellent foundation for further engagement in joint initiatives and projects. Sometimes, companies reward students for their involvement. One example is the funding of a study visit to Łódź Design Week for students of Interior Design at WSPA and the Faculty of Arts at UMCS, which served as educational support for the students.

The premise of the "MATCH" project is to build direct relationships and student experience with companies/institutions interested in their ideas, with the active involvement and support of local government. Companies that have participated in the project indicate that the model being developed in Lublin is unique and regarded as a model of cooperation between business, local government, and the academic sector. Universities, due to the constantly changing labour market, strive to establish ever more new contacts with business so that their education is as practical as possible and to effectively train future industry professionals. A major value of the "MATCH" project is also the flexibility of its solutions. MATCH as a model of cooperation is based on dialogue, which makes it an ideal solution for small, medium-sized, and large international companies alike.

Overview of activities carried out as part of the "MATCH" project since its inception (the calendar includes all initiatives implemented from the beginning of the project's operation to 27.02.2025, based on information from the website lublin.eu (Match, n.d.).

Edition 2020/2021 (pilot)

The first – pilot – edition was initiated in October 2020 (each subsequent edition begins with the start of a new academic year) by the Lublin City Hall in cooperation with the Faculty of Arts at UMCS in Lublin. As part of so-called implementation di-

plomas and course completions, students established cooperation with local companies in order to develop projects that were implemented by the companies.

| Business partner participating in the project | Product developed through cooperation |
|---|--|
| Medical University | Promotional film on cervical cancer prevention |
| The Razors Edge Barbershop | Film/animation promoting a charity event |
| PREVLLY | Visual identity system for a startup |
| INERGIA | Film/animation promoting the company on social media |
| PIXBLOCKS | Logos for use in the company's communication |
| Foundation for the Development of the Lublin Region | Graphics for the Foundation's website |
| · | |

Tab. 1. Products developed within the pilot edition of the "MATCH" project

Source: own compillation based on Edycja 2020/2021, n.d.

Visual identity system

Edition 2021/2022

Mateusz Toruń Law Office

In the second edition, students of Interior Design from the University College of Enterprise and Administration in Lublin joined the project. Together with students from the Faculty of Arts at UMCS, they started cooperation with Lublin-Gala Shopping Centre, IKEA Lublin, and SKENDE Shopping Centre. Within this edition, the following were created:

1. 4 neon signs designed by a student of the Faculty of Arts at UMCS in Lublin – Ms. Miruna Gheordunescu, created under the supervision of Mr. Michał Ćwiek as part of the author's diploma project. The neon signs were exhibited in front of the buildings of the Faculty of Arts at UMCS, the 3rd High School named after the Union of Lublin in Lublin, the Academic Center for Culture and Media "Chatka Żaka", and the Centre for the Meeting of Cultures.

IKEA participated in the creation of the neon signs and also covered the cost of materials necessary for their production (**amounting to PLN 15,000 net**). Below are illustrations presenting the neon signs (all photos used in this subsection come from the website of the Lublin City Hall):



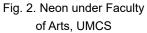




Fig. 3. Neon under "Chatka Żaka" Source: Edycja 2021/2022, n.d.



Fig. 4. Neon under 3rd High School "Unia"



Fig. 5. Neon under Centre for the Meeting of Culture Source: Edycja 2021/2022, n.d.

2. Exhibition of works titled "IKEA in the Lublin way", prepared by students of Interior Design at WSPA in Lublin, under the supervision of Dr. Małgorzata Michalska-Nakonieczna, Professor at WSPA. The exhibition presented furniture donated to the students by IKEA, who, using folk and regional motifs, showcased a different side of popular products offered by the store. As part of the project, for example, a graphite-coloured sofa with original decoration was created. The inspiration was the Krzczonów folk costume, complemented by the student's own decorative idea using colourful ribbons. The exhibition was available to visitors in the IKEA/SKENDE space until the end of July 2022.

3. Graphics for an application promoting ecological solutions in waste segregation, designed by Ms. Daria Morgen, a student of the Faculty of Arts at UMCS, created under the supervision of Mr. Michał Ćwiek.

- Video presentations of selected IKEA products, prepared by a group of students from the Faculty of Arts at UMCS, under the supervision of Dr. Sławomir Plewko.
- 5. Graphic identity project "Dog Zone" for the company SKENDE, developed by a group of students from the Faculty of Arts at UMCS, under the supervision of Mr. Michał Ćwiek.
- 6. "Inaczej" information board project for the company SKENDE, developed by a group of students from the Interior Design program at WSPA in Lublin, under the supervision of Dr. Małgorzata Michalska-Nakonieczna, Professor at WSPA.

Edition 2022/2023

The third edition of the "MATCH" project expanded the consortium of universities participating in the project – students from the Faculty of Management at Lublin University of Technology joined students from the Faculty of Arts at UMCS and the Interior Design program at WSPA. New companies and public institutions also joined the project: Orange, Aliplast, Skende Shopping, Primary School No. 20 named after Jarosław Dąbrowski, Czechowicz Museum, and small entrepreneurs from Zamojska Street and Lubartowska Street in Lublin. As part of this edition, the following were created:

1. 5 design variants of aluminium facade for the company Aliplast





Fig. 6., 7. Five design variants of aluminium facade for the company Aliplast Source: materials of Municipality of Lublin.

2. **Design of classroom door stickers at Primary School no 20**, in cooperation with the company Skende Shopping. The doors featured images of famous figures from history, culture, art, media, and business, presented with a "modern twist". Students also hand-made additional graphic elements around the doors and in the appearance of the school corridors to enrich the visual message. Skende was both a partner and sponsor of the initiative.





Fig. 8., 9., 10. Stickers featuring famous figures on the entrance doors to classrooms at Primary School no. 20 in Lublin

Source: materials of Municipality of Lublin.

- 3. Interior design arrangements for the headquarters of the company Orange in Lublin. The following were created: floor signage graphics (stairwells); large-format graphics and the arrangement of the office space in the connector on the 6th floor; large-format graphics and the interior design of the employee relaxation room on the 2nd floor.
- 4. Design for the adaptation of the courtyard of a historic tenement house, which houses the Czechowicz Museum, for recreational purposes.

5. 9 marketing audits and social media training sessions for entrepreneurs from Lubartowska Street and Zamojska Street.

Edition 2023/2024

The fourth edition of the project was a joint effort of students from the Faculty of Arts at UMCS in Lublin and the Interior Design program at WSPA in Lublin, joined by students from the State Secondary School of Fine Arts named after Cyprian Kamil Norwid in Lublin, as well as the companies Skende and IKEA. The clients of the students and pupils were: Special Educational Center No. 1 in Lublin, Lublin Airport, and the company Medisept. As part of this edition, the following were created:

1. Interior design and mural graphics project for the dormitory of Special Educational Centre No. 1 in Lublin. The wall graphic design and painting were the responsibility of students from the State Secondary School of Fine Arts; the interior space design was prepared by students of Interior Design at WSPA, with the support of designers from the IKEA store in Lublin. The residents of Special Educational Centre No. 1 also participated in the process of redesigning the dormitory's common spaces. They submitted their ideas both in the preparatory phase - when the main functions of the place were defined – and in the design phase. All of this was done to ensure that the space would be pleasant, functional, and suited to the needs of the residents. During joint workshops, they also prepared drawings, some elements of which were incorporated into the project and appeared in the newly arranged space. It is worth mentioning that the Skende shopping centre was a partner in the project, supporting the education of people with intellectual disabilities. The company covered the cost of the painting, while IKEA provided the furniture necessary to furnish and arrange the space.





Figures 11., 12. Relaxation space at Special Educational Centre No. 1 after furnishing and decorating the walls with graphics as part of the "MATCH" project Source: materials of Municipality of Lublin.

2. Interior design project and large-format graphics design for the training and event room at the company Medisept.

 Space arrangement project – children's corner and VIP area, as well as large-format graphic design in the passageway of the arrivals hall at Lublin Airport.

Edition 2024/2025

In the latest edition covering the 2024/2025 academic year, all cooperation between the existing project partners is currently in the implementation phase (at the time of writing this article, i.e. February–March 2025), therefore not all final student project outcomes have yet been completed. At this moment, the following projects are being carried out (developed thanks to the courtesy and information provided by Ms. Monika Król, Deputy Director for Entrepreneurship, Creative Industries and International Projects, Department of Culture, Lublin City Hall):

Tab. 2. Products under development within edition 2024/2025 of the "MATCH" project

| Business partner participating in the project | Product developed through cooperation |
|---|---|
| Orange | Interior design projects and large-format wall graphics for office spaces |
| BALL | Interior design projects and large-format wall graphics for the conference room and reception area |
| Medisept | Interior and furnishing design projects for the conference room, as well as large-format wall graphics for office spaces |
| Lublin Airport | Space arrangement projects (children's corner and VIP area), as well as large-format graphics in the arrivals hall passageway |
| Urban Lab (Lublin City) | Ledon designs (These are illuminated combinations of plastic and LED light, considered a new generation of neon signs |
| Noyen | Instructional/promotional videos for industrial washers |

Source: own compilation.

Summary of the "MATCH" project implementation to date, visions for the future

The year 2025 marks the fifth year of implementing the "MATCH" project in close cooperation between the Lublin City Hall, Lublin's higher education institutions, and business partners. Five years is a time that allows for a brief summary of the achievements to date, a review of the benefits and incurred costs, as well as an attempt to outline certain directions for future development. According to Ms. Monika Król, Deputy Director for Entrepreneurship, Creative Industries, and International Projects at the Department of Culture of the Lublin City Hall – who is one of the originators

of the project and has been present throughout the implementation of each cooperation concept – the "MATCH" project is growing and evolving, adapting to the changes and expectations of Lublin's universities and companies. It is worth noting that the city has managed to develop a special type of project – the so-called "MATCH JUNIOR" – aimed at cooperation between companies and Lublin schools, in response to their support needs (graphics and interior design in schools – described in the previous subsections). Another important value of the project is the establishment of cooperation with small entrepreneurs from Lubartowska and Zamojska streets, in order to identify their marketing needs (which is undoubtedly a gesture of the city toward small business and shows that the project is not limited to large companies and corporations, but also recognizes the presence of smaller businesses).

In the opinion of the author of this article, the "MATCH" project offers yet another significant benefit for students – thanks to the involvement of university supervisors in the implementation of specific projects for individual companies, students can be assured that cooperation with commercial companies will not take the form of "unpaid work", where the student is reduced to the role of an employee without salary. The presence of academic supervisors allows, on the one hand, the progress of the work to be overseen, and on the other, ensures that the activities being carried out are both educational (learning in controllable market conditions) and practical (solving a specific problem, addressing a real and concrete client need). This approach also serves as a vehicle for spreading academic values and instilling them in entrepreneurs, who approach cooperation with students and universities as equal partners.

In response to companies' reported needs for the creation of projects and solutions that could be implemented in practice, the organization of competitions is planned in cooperation with universities offering technically oriented programs (so-called implementation "MATCH"). The expected result is the implementation of winning projects by companies. In the vision of the Lublin City Hall, the "MATCH" project is to be a tool for implementing solutions with commercialization potential.

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About the Author

Jacek Lis – MA in International Relations at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. Since 2019 he has been associated with the University College of Enterprise and Administration in Lublin, where he has been Chancellor since 2022. His interests revolve around topics related to cooperation between universities and the socio-economic environment, internationalization of universities and cooperation with foreign partners in the context of developing education and training programs aimed at the academic community.

O autorze

Jacek Lis – magister stosunków międzynarodowych na Uniwersytecie Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej w Lublinie, od 2019 roku związany z Wyższą Szkołą Przedsiębiorczości i Administracji w Lublinie, gdzie od 2022 roku pełni funkcję kanclerza. Jego zainteresowania oscylują wokół tematów dotyczących współpracy uczelni wyższych z otoczeniem społeczno-gospodarczym, umiędzynarodowienia uczelni wyższych i współpracy z partnerami zagranicznymi w kontekście rozwijania programów kształcenia i szkoleń skierowanych do środowiska akademickiego.

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