

**TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF MEGATREND UNIVERSITY
– A SIGNIFICANT PAGE
IN SERBIAN EDUCATIONAL HISTORY**

Twenty-five years have passed since the foundation of the first institution within the present system of Megatrend University higher education framework. During this period, our University has shared the destiny of our people and the country, which was difficult, tragic, unjust and very complex. Despite all these unfavorable circumstances and consequences coming from negative international environment, but also due to turbulent internal political, economic and social development, Megatrend University has achieved significant growth, development, and become one of the biggest private universities in the wider region.

In these twenty-five years our University has passed through the process of full institutionalization and accreditation demonstrating that a private educational institution could be modern, flexible, and adaptable to all challenges of the last decade of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. It is important to underline that the development strategy of Professor Mica Jovanovic, the founder, first rector and the owner of the University was to bring to Serbia a completely new concept of higher education based not only on high quality of attractive and effective educational programs and practices, but also on demetropolization of higher education as a concrete support to the development of our country. This initiative meant the establishment of various institutions of higher education throughout the Republic of Serbia.

As a result of the intensive development and constant modernization and innovation, Megatrend University is a recognizable and respected institution in the frame of Serbian educational system today, consisting of 11 faculties, 2 colleges, Megatrend Virtual University, Institute for New Technologies and TV Metropolis. We also have eight modern campuses in 6 towns in Serbia (Belgrade, Zajecar, Backa Topola, Pozarevac, Valjevo and Vrsac). The educational institutions of Megatrend University provide academic, as well as specialist, masters and doctoral programs in several scientific disciplines (business, international economics, management, art and design, culture and media, bio-farming, governance and administration, computer science). The fact that in 25 years of continuous work and effort in the field of higher education our university has had tens of thousands of active students and graduates at all academic and scientific levels, is something to be proud of.

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Until July 2014 Professor Jovanovic successfully led our University, guided by the vision of a modern, highest quality and functional educational process and scientific research. This concept resulted in the dynamic development and rapid transformation and internationalization of Megatrend University, which in 1999 became a full member of the Global University Network NEWS (North-East-West-South), which gathers universities from all around the world. Also, all the institutions of Megatrend University are members of the EAMS (Euro-Asia Management Studies Association), the only global association for the management studies. Finally, in January 2003, Megatrend University became a full member of the Serbian Universities Conference.

If from today's perspective the contribution of Professor Jovanovic to the development of our University and the Serbian education in general should be estimated, there is no doubt that he gave a great impetus to the modernization of the concept of university, main characteristics of the educational process and, more importantly, the capacity of adaptability to the latest trends coming from the globalized world. In essence, he was a visionary who tried in his own, completely new way to modernize and open the university to broader strata of our impoverished society. However, this dynamic project, as well as his particular way of managing such an important educational institution also provoked various kinds of reactions, frequently unjust and unfair, and definitely inherent to conservative views and spirits that, unfortunately, still prevail in our academic circles.

As mentioned before, the new Rector with the new Rector's Collegium has taken the leadership of our University since July this year. The strategy of the new university leadership and management is based on the conviction that Megatrend University has to be transformed into the center of the highest quality education based on modern and functional teaching methodologies and scientific achievements. In fact, our goal is to achieve pragmatic, efficient and effective knowledge transfer, i.e. the creation of applicable competencies and contextual skills of graduates in all fields and levels that our Curricula offer. In practice, this strategy means that we will always and consistently insist on quality, autonomy, freedom, the firm commitment to the realization of our educational and research mission, but also our intention to maintain full openness towards Serbian society, the region, Europe, and the world.

At the same time, the University constantly makes great efforts to reach top European standards in education and provide high-quality and applicable knowledge for our students. This is a great challenge having in mind quite unfavorable social and economic conditions in our country. Whatsoever, we are aware of our mission, and that will be our contribution to the progress of the Serbian society based on knowledge and expertise. To accomplish this mission, Megatrend University and all its employees are aware that they must constantly work in order to maintain high academic level, credibility and of course, the autonomy that is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia.

We live at the time which is increasingly accelerated and changeable. This is one of the main characteristic of the 21st century, which is ultimately global and complex in its dynamics and interactions. We must be conscious of the fact that citizens of the world interact today in almost all fields and in the frame of the community that has an increasing number of cultures, languages, social heritages, governments, business practices, markets, exports, and of course that all this requires a new education and scientific approaches.

To say it again, the complexity of the 21st century is evident in many respects. For example, we are the witnesses of the formation of the so-called “global society” or “learning society” with all possible challenges coming from the spheres of politics, economics, social policy, culture, science, education, moral values, etc. In addition, some authors have begun to speak about the process of defining a new civilization era that started with quite uncertain and contradictory results. Briefly, the main paradox of this phenomenon could be seen, on the one hand, in great scientific and technological development, achievements and progress, but on the other, we have a scenario in which cruel war activities take place, as well as great material and human devastation, underdevelopment, and poverty which reaches alarming indicators. Parallel to this, it should be underlined that humanity has become conscious of increasing diversity in so many aspects of life, political and social organizations, productivity, religion and cultural stratification and fragmentation. Based on these dramatic and profound changes we could observe that we are living in the era of globalization or mundialization that create completely new development models. These models turn the actual world into a virtual one by imposing universality, although numerous unresolved social problems at the national level still persist. In other words, this fragmenting tendency within the framework of globalization is weakening and changing our societies, our identity and our culture. Simply, the present time seems to us as a time of deepening differences and new social divisions, never seen before in human history.

According to all these changes the new Rector’s Collegium adopted the stance that globalization also opens up favorable space for development, but only for those actors who are able to manage those challenges, becoming thus more competitive and efficient. This increased level of competitiveness and efficiency certainly requires new knowledge and skills. This is an imperative of modern education to which we aspire.

To conclude, we are aware that the entire society and the country are forced to compete together with the business sector to become successfully integrated into globalized world. This new economic and geopolitical scenario of the 21st century involves a race among education systems functioning within each individual State. Therefore, it is urgent to structure a new basis for our University and make it capable of providing quick and pragmatic answers to so many demands, in order to adapt to new trends in global education. This involves the necessity of

increasing our capacities of teaching and researching, changing our traditional academic structures, philosophy, concepts of education, as well as upgrading programs for our academic and non academic staff. In short, our task is to incorporate Megatrend University in the culture of relevance, quality, evaluation, high information technology, strategic management and the progressive internationalization. All this inspires the new Rector's Collegium in its desire to be socially responsible and give a concrete contribution to the development of our country.

This is our strategy. It reflects our intention to become not only an integral and full member of the national structure of knowledge, expertise and competences based on the standards applicable within the framework of a the European Common Space of Research and Education, but also a university of recognizable and respectable references for the Balkan region and beyond, Eastern Europe, the Black Sea basin and other regions of the contemporary world.

There is no doubt that previous achievements in the field of international positioning of Megatrend University give us the right to look at this task optimistically. The realization of this objective will enable our students and staff significant international experience and knowledge of various specific fields and disciplines that exist in the areas of modern education, science and culture. Also, we see Megatrend University in the future as an institution specialized in the field of scientific research, and we do hope that all our faculties and the Institute for New Technologies will give a real support to the development of science within our University and the country through developing cooperation with other specialized research institutions.

This is our development vision which could realistically turn our University, in the years to come, into a center of excellence in academic and scientific fields in which Megatrend University has previously gained an international reputation and affirmation. These are in the fields of regional studies, global communication systems and intercultural management. Also, it means that our priorities must respond to the challenges of the time we are living in, and the demands of the new social contract that is urgently necessary between our society and the institutions of higher education. Parallel to this, we have to attract sufficient number of students without undermining the quality of education, provide efficient and functional administration and student services, and further intensify the internationalization of all aspects and spheres of educational programs, scientific research and cultural activities. Only in this way can a modern and ambitious university such as ours be truly socially responsible in its mission to educate young generations coming from all segments of our society, make intellectual, professional and scientific contributions to the development of Serbian society and the state and, finally, become a university whose role will be very important for the overall development and international position of our country.