

# THE NATIONAL IT COMPETITION IN BLAGOEVGRAD - THE SUCCESSFUL CONNECTION BETWEEN SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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Creative thinking helps students face many challenges that they will face in their careers and personal lives. One of the main tasks of higher education is to encourage students' creativity. The development of students' creative characteristics are important in the development of curricula and practices. This report aims to present the Information Technology Competition, which is being held for the thirteenth time with the theme of the year "European Green Pact" in the Seventh Secondary School "Kuzman Shapkarev" - Blagoevgrad in the following areas:

V - VII class:

- Computer modeling;
- Website;
- Interactive presentation ;
- Group project \*

VIII - XII class:

- Website;
- Multimedia videos;
- 3D modeling \*
- Standalone computer applications
- Internet applications.

Students from 5th to 12th grade can take part in the competition. Its purpose is to provide students with the opportunity for intellectual expression, to motivate teachers to work with children with outstanding abilities in the relevant scientific fields through the use of computer technology. The applied nature of the developed projects allows for the integration of information technologies in the process of change towards sustainable development and their adaptation to development education.

In the present study we will present a brief history of the competition. We will show the positive trends that it led to, namely 98% of the participants enrolled in higher education. About 10% write doctorates and some of them have successfully defended them. Another goal of this report is to show the main directions in which the participants compete.

The successful connection between secondary and higher education is realized thanks to the management of the Seventh Secondary School - Blagoevgrad in the person of its director Dr. Liliya Stoyanova. She invited university professors to the jury, who helped to achieve a high level of competition from regional, to go through national and to develop into an international competition with great authority. We will present other positive trends in the competition, namely the holding of Master Classes by the jury with all participants and the holding of discussions to discuss the results of the competition.

Co-organizers of the competition are the Regional Department of Education, Blagoevgrad Municipality, South-West University "Neofit Rilski", University of Library Science and Information Technology. They accept the participants without an entrance exam. One of the main policies of ULSIT is to participate in and support competitions in informatics and computer science. Investing in young staff is a positive trend in the development of ULSIT. The students who participated in the competition in Blagoevgrad are one of the best students of ULSIT and they find successful realization in many prestigious companies in the industry. In this report we will present good practices of such students.

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