

First Sri Lankan Visit of the Project Coordinator Guenther Retscher with all Partners and their Representatives

January 31 to February 12, 2022

Already in the second year of the project's lifetime, the LBS2ITS project coordinator Guenther Retscher had the chance to meet all partners in person during his first visit to Sri Lanka. All previous meetings had to be held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The warm welcome and reception from the Vice-Chancellor Major General Milinda Peiris at the General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) ([link to KDU website](#)) was the first highlight of Guenther's visit. With the Dean of Graduate Studies Brigadier RGU Rajapakshe RSP, future collaboration with joint supervision of PhD students between TU Wien and KDU was initiated. An adjunct professorship was offered to Guenther Retscher.

With the KDU team led by Dr. Pradeep Kalansooriya, the dissemination strategies of the project results were discussed in detail. His team is responsible for the website and the social media appearance of LBS2ITS. Further improvements for the appearance and visibility of the project were initiated. Moreover, the planning of the train-the-teachers courses was followed up. At KDU the train-the-teachers course on *Smartphone positioning techniques for in- and outdoor localization* is scheduled for the end of August 2022.

The following partner visited by Guenther was the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (USJ) with his Faculty of Technology. This faculty now resides on a new University campus in Pitipana – North Homagama to the East of Nugegoda and was built just two years ago. New laboratories and classrooms are available for the students on this campus. Guenther had fruitful discussions with the Dean of the Faculty Prof. Nilmini Liyanage about future directions to go in the collaboration with TU Wien and all LBS2ITS project partners.



Reception by Dean Prof. Nilmini Liyanage at USJ

The local coordinator of the USJ project team Dr. Choolaka Hewawasam, his team and Guenther finalized the preparation for the first on-site workshop on *Quality assurance (QA) in teaching*, which was held successfully in the following week from February 7 to 8. This workshop had to be split previously into two parts, a virtual part held from November 16 to 17 online and the on-site part mentioned before. All Sri Lankan project partners sent four participants each to attend this workshop. The Vice-Chancellor of USJ Senior Prof. Sudantha Liyanage joined also the workshop attendees during one evening for a discussion of future collaborations in education and research.

The next visit was paid to the local coordinators Amila Buddhika Jayasinghe and Loshaka Perera of the University of Moratuwa (UOM). At UOM, Guenther met with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Prof. PKS

Mahanama and the representatives of the Departments of Town and Country Planning and Civil Engineering with the project partner of the Transportation Engineering Group. With the head of this group Prof. C. Jayasinghe, future collaboration was also explored.



Meeting the team at UOM

In addition, at UOM Guenther had the opportunity to meet the representatives of the company Prome Engineering who showcased their equipment for 'smart classrooms' (<https://smartclassroom.lk/>). With the LBS2ITS project funds, a modernization of the facilities of the four partner Universities for distance learning is foreseen towards the implementation of smart classrooms.

After the above-mentioned workshop on QA in teaching at USJ, Guenther Retscher travelled together with the European project partner from the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) Prof. Vassilis Gikas to the town of Belihuloya in the mountainous inland of the island in the second week of his stay in Sri Lanka. Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL) with its Faculty of Geomatics is located in this tranquil town. With the Dean of the Faculty Mr. Vipula Abeyratne – who is also the local coordinator of the LBS2ITS project team from SUSL – preparatory work on the train-the-teachers course on *Alternative Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT) technologies* was intensified. This course is scheduled to be held from May 2 to 6, 2022. The site at SUSL for the practical fieldwork and laboratory facilities were inspected and selected for this course.

An important meeting was also held with Mr. Rajitha Jayasinghe from SULECO (Pvt) Ltd during Guenther's stay in Sri Lanka. His company was previously selected to deliver new GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite Systems) equipment from the Italian manufacturer Stonex® Srl to all four partner Universities. In this meeting, the last equipment purchase contract with KDU was also signed. Mr. Jayasinghe indicated and offered his full support for the project which is guaranteed even beyond the lifetime of the project.

For the project coordinator Guenther Retscher the first Sri Lankan visit in the course of LBS2ITS offered a great opportunity to meet again with already known partners and for the first time in person with the new partners to discuss the project's progress and the planning of the upcoming train-the-teachers courses and workshops. A quite ambitious and challenging schedule of all courses was developed which has to be implemented in the two remaining years of the LBS2ITS project.

Thank you for the warm welcome from all partners and the successful discussions in the amazing country Sri Lanka!

Günther Retscher