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ERASMUS+ INTERNATIONAL CREDIT MOBILITY: AUTH'S EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

A year ago, Erasmus+ went international opening up new paths and challenges for the internationalization of academic institutions; a strategic advantage towards the new era of studies' and higher institutions' internationalization. Even by having valuable experience of the Erasmus Mundus programmes, putting into a single framework the international mobility in the already existing regulations of Erasmus+ has proved to be a challenging task. Starting out from the application form and going further to the first implementation of the programme, this paper attempts to communicate the whole experience of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in relation to that of other European Universities. Namely, the positive and negative points of the application form, the selection of partner institutions, the internal and external procedures followed, the difficulties emerging from the international partnerships and the subsequent collaboration and the different structure of partner Universities, the bureaucracy involved in the mobilities, the cross-cultural aspects as well as the day-to-day management of the programme. Given the active interest of Partner Countries to approach the European Educational System, Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility Programme has the potential to create and enhance new pathways of academic cooperation.

The paper resulted from a workshop held during ERACON 2016. Its theme focuses on the lessons learned and the valuable experience acquired by the application and the initiation of the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility Programme for the first time by Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

**THE EXPERIENCE OF ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY:
DIFFICULTIES AND GOOD PRACTICES**

When Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility (from now on Erasmus+ ICM) programme was first introduced and information started being diffused, it looked like a new facet of Erasmus Mundus. At that time, it seemed that this new programme could be run in the same way, following, more or less, the same rules and the same schemes of managerial procedures. However, it has been an early realization that Erasmus+ ICM programme was quite different from Erasmus Mundus even if it came as a continuation of that one. That is, it was meant to follow Erasmus+ programme, which has recently replaced the previous Erasmus Programme and several other programmes as well, creating an all-inclusive umbrella in the area of European education-related programmes. An one-size-fits-all approach was not enough anymore. Administration and management was not the only aspect to be considered different; the Erasmus+ ICM Programme was here to mark an enhancement towards Higher Institutions' Internationalisation contributing to the educational strengthening between EU and non-EU Universities by mobilizing both staff and students worldwide. Moreover, mobilities in the framework of Erasmus+ ICM were proved to be more than important for the improvement of international partnerships or their further enhancement.

The application process of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (from now on AUTh)for the Erasmus+ ICM was the *baptism by fire*; the first call for the Erasmus+ ICM Programme application was published in autumn 2014 followed by several informative sessions and events organised by the Hellenic National Agency and European Commission in order for all stakeholders to familiarize themselves with this new application and be encouraged to apply. The application process itself made evident that was vital to start reflecting on AUTh's multiple international cooperations on a different base than the one applied in Erasmus Mundus as well as through other similar initiatives. Existing cooperations should from now on be considered under a new light; that of their performance and quality, their beneficial factors and added value for our University, as well as the perspectives of further development and impact for both Partners and AUTh, in the case they were integrated in Erasmus+ ICM Programme. In addition to the above, all partnerships need to be assessed as per their alignment with the internationalisation policy of our University. It became apparent that a systematisation of international cooperation was imperative; a difficult step to be achieved given the diverse and most of the time different nature of possible partnerships as well as their distinct origin and framework of development. Another difficult task to undertake during the application process was to prioritize geographic regions of cooperation since a large and multi-thematic University of 41 Schools holds a huge number of partnerships outside the context of specific actions and programmes (e.g., MOUs, International

Scientific Agreements, bilateral cooperation between specific labs and units of the University and more) that could potentially be developed into successful Erasmus+ ICM partnerships.

Following the paradigm of the long-established intra-European mobility under Erasmus, Erasmus LLP, Erasmus+ as well as after the advice of the Hellenic National Agency, an Erasmus+ ICM Committee (from now on ICM Committee) at AUTh was created in which both members of academia and administrative staff equally participate. The first duty of this Committee was to gather and assess all existing international partnerships as per their contribution to the scopes of Erasmus+ International Programme. It was decided that the Department of European Educational Programmes (from now on DEEP) of AUTh would coordinate all actions towards the application and the management of the Programme; Scientific Responsible would be the Vice Rector of Academic and Student Affairs being at the same time Chair of the Erasmus+ ICM Committee.

Having put into effect the scopes of the ICM Committee, as a next step all Schools of AUTh were asked to suggest partnerships that they considered strong enough to be further developed in the framework of Erasmus+ ICM programme. In the same time, DEEP had to elaborate on all centrally managed international cooperation that is Erasmus Mundus partnerships, MOUs and International Scientific Agreements. The ICM Committee finally proceeded to pre-select Partner Universities out of all existing and suggested partnerships keeping in mind the following: a) the internationalisation priorities of the University, b) the quality and the reliability of the existing partnerships, c) the potential of suggested new partnerships, d) the allocation of mobilities and budget by the European Commission. Additional parameters have been taken into account such as the status of the Higher Institutions nationally and internationally, their willingness to participate in the Programme and the mobility support mechanisms they offered. Figure 1 of below depicts all factors and procedure taken into account for the selection of potential partnerships.
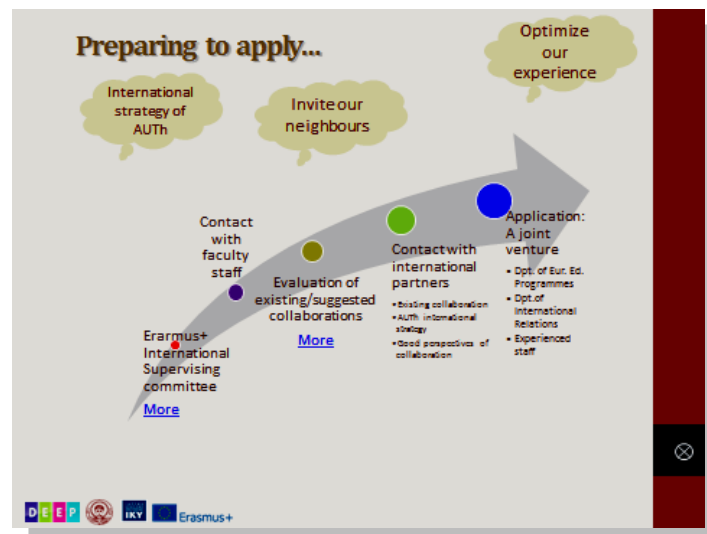
Figure 1:Selection of partner universities included in the application

Specifically, all preselected partners were contacted to express their intention to cooperate with Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. In addition, we had to inform thoroughly all those we contacted about the nature of the Programme. It was soon marked that most non-EU Higher Institutions were not fully aware of the function and the nature of the new Programme. Many clarifications and thorough explanation/description had to be made and lots of emailing took place so that we ensure that all Partner Universities had access to as much efficient information as possible. That being said, the necessity of prior training on the Erasmus+ ICM programme could be recommended as an indispensable priority for its smoother continuation. As a result of all the above, almost all Universities that were contacted responded positively confirming the great challenge the Erasmus+ ICM Programme represents for the internationalization of the European universities. Regarding the budget, the automatic generated tables of the application itself were extremely helpful.

In order to include in the application all interested parties as potential Partners, much information was needed, especially for those with which small prior education-related cooperation existed. Asking information from each university was a long procedure and for this purpose we created an e-form (Figure 2) through which most information was gathered without the time-consuming exchange of emails. The e-form included questions in line with the fields of the application and proved to be practical, easy to use and to update. A minor problem that emerged was that in some countries e-forms do not function properly due to different internet policies and IT

server functions and the answers had to be sent in a different template; but these cases were rare and didn't lead to us reconsidering the above mentioned tool.

Figure 2: E-form for information collection from partner universities

Further to the above and in regard to the application process it's worth mentioning that the application took long to be filled in because on the one hand all details of existing partnerships should be transferred according to the requirements of the Programme and on the other hand because of the available (and in some cases restricted) number of mobilities. The problems faced during 2014 and 2015 applications were similar although the 2015 application form was slightly simplified. Namely, the characters' limit in all fields allowed only generic descriptions without many explanations even if those contributed to the quality of the submitted application. From another point of view of course, this limitation set limits to the volume of the documentation submitted. Another issue was that details and information was required for all countries in the same geographic region. Consequently one had either to repeat or refer to the first country applied for in the specific geographic/region. Given that internationalisation policies in the countries of a region are more or less common, repetitions could not always be avoided. Additionally, the budget allocation – taking into account the level (students/staff), the country, the number of Incoming/Outgoing grantees as well as the budget restrictions per country as directed by the European Commission – proved to be a tough task and a puzzle to be solved. All that along with the great reciprocal interest in certain countries made the preparation of the budget quite difficult if not inflexible.

On the next level of the application and when the results were announced, all Partners had to be contacted in order to be informed on the outcome. That brought over an avalanche of emails asking about the allocation of the budget and of the mobilities. Few universities asked about the organizational support fund but that was settled with sufficient explanations from our part. This hectic period was mainly settled through the creation of informative but yet clear tables including budget for each country as well as the mobilities allocated and granted by the National Agency. Additionally, informative material with the guidelines, the description of DEEP and AUTh were distributed electronically to all Partner Countries/Universities.

Starting the implementation of the Programme, the Erasmus+ International Inter-institutional Agreements (from now on Erasmus+ International IIA) became the primary objective since it required a lot of work both from our University and the Partner Universities. Nevertheless, AUTh uses its long established on-line system for the IIA which helped the whole process both administratively and time-wise. Although many issues, like communication with the Greek consular authorities abroad, are more or less manageable thanks to our prior experience with Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus Programmes, there were several things to solve; grant related issues in the light of capital controls in Greece, grant agreements, ECTS recognition in relation to other accreditation systems and other similar issues. Except for these, we had to negotiate with our Partners the number of mobilities since the European Commission awarded them on a per-partner-country scheme and each coordinating university had the responsibility to allocate them to each Partner university. We selected to include the total of mobilities for each country in the Erasmus+ International IIA for three reasons:

1) We were not aware at that time which institutions would be more dynamic and responsive to this new Programme,
2) We wanted to avoid modifications of the agreements in case of change of the number of mobilities for each university in the case we allocated them per university and,
3) The number of the mobilities per country as it is rather small, the allocation would be neither easy nor reasonable.

Of course, this choice brought inevitable questions from our Partners because they wanted to know exactly the number of mobilities corresponding to their university (in contrast to the whole Partner country), a characteristic that made us to reconsider this choice in the next version of the Programme and the formation of the Erasmus+ International IIAs.

STRUCTURE OF THE WORKSHOP

In the workshop participated around 100 people, members of several EU and non-EU Universities. The participation in the workshop was free-of-charge, thus it was

not a prerequisite that all participants were familiar with Erasmus+ ICM Programme. So, it was deemed necessary that a brief presentation of the Programme had to be made for reasons of coherence and efficiency. The duration of the workshop was one (1) hour. The participants were split in eight (8) groups. The groups were formed spontaneously, without any kind of categorization. All groups were asked to discuss and answer briefly to the following four (4) sets of questions:

Pre-Application (Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility)

Inviting Partner-Universities
1. What are the factors to take under consideration in inviting/finding Partner Universities in the context of the Erasmus+ International?
2. What are the communication channels to be used?
3. How can we evaluate our possible partners?

Application
1. How important is a user-friendly application for the coordinating University?
2. What are the difficulties to deal with during the application process?
3. What are the criteria of applying for/allocating mobilities to Partner Universities (Country)

Implementation
1. What are the difficulties in establishing the Inter-Institutional Agreements within Erasmus+ International?
2. How do you allocate the granted mobilities between the Partner Universities within a country?

Procedures
1. What are the expected difficulties in the grants' payments?
2. How can you best communication the necessities of the Erasmus+ International Programme?

Each group elected a leader who presented the results of the discussion in their own group. The leaders of all groups presented the issues discussed in their groups without following always the structure of the questionnaire. After the presentation of the discussion results, the organisers (writers of the current article) of the workshop presented the difficulties met from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. A short discussion followed in regards to the points stressed by the working groups and the organisers of the workshops.

WORKING GROUPS DISCUSSION RESULTS

Inviting/Selecting Partner-Universities:
- It is important to be in touch with ongoing partners. Members of academia were asked information about any ongoing collaboration.

- It is also necessary to set a strict time frame so that the procedure functions promptly.
- It is not considered right to accept invitations from unknown Universities.
- More information and training should be provided so that they get to know the procedures and the is expected from them

Application:
- It was suggested that the application could be launched per country.
- The criteria should depend on the projects running per country etc.
- More attention should be paid to the issues that non-EU Partner Universities face and the procedure should be simplified for their facilitation.
- As non-EU Partners are not aware of the function of the European system, they had to focus more on the new aspects of the Programme as they had no experience of similar funding before.
- An Erasmus+ Staff Week should be organised in prior to train Partners on the application system.
- It would be useful if previous training and collaboration between partners existed in order to facilitate the explanations required by the Application itself.

Implementation:
- It was stressed that the Partners of the Erasmus+ ICM programme work in different systems and conditions.
- The procedural or better Erasmus+ Programme mentality is not always in the same line to the European one so it can take very long to establish a interinstitutional agreement.
- Issues of communication were also reported.
- It was also reported that more time was needed in order to prepare, complete and conclude the Erasmus+ International IIA. That goes for EU and non-EU partners.
- It was also reported that there was not enough time to prepare mobilities starting from September 2016 because the mobility-related procedures are time-devouring (e.g. selection of candidates, visas).

Grant payment:
- A lot of difficulties in terms of finance issues like Institutions not being able to pay in cash, the immediate or on-time payment, etc.
- It was suggested that an Academic Coordinator for each country is appointed in Universities, ideally from all Faculties so that academic staff is satisfied.
- The group suggested the best duration of mobility is one (1) year.
- In addition, it was reported that a constant question is why one country cannot be given the money another country was given.
- Partners are not aware of the administative workload.
- Budget was in some cases horizontally cut and it seemed to difficult to

explain the situation to the relevant Partners.
- It was also suggested that National Agencies should all keep the same deadlines if the programme is to be decentralised.

General comments:
- Some of the non-EU partners are not familiar with administrative work in the framework of European Erasmus+ Programmes.
- The Programme should undertake a holistic simplification; it would be more efficient and it would work better.
- Much work should be done in middle of summer holidays.

CONCLUSIONS

A general conclusion, both from the workshop and our experience in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, focuses on the simplification of the application and implementation procedures of the Erasmus+ ICM programme. Many believe/suggest that an adaptation period is needed for the non-EU Partners before the adaptation of the strict rules of intra-european Erasmus+ mobility programme.

Another issue that prevailed regards the complexity of mobilities from and to non-European countries. From the academic point of view, students and staff are requested to integrate in a new and unknown educational system and work environment with different rules, conditions and expectations. That was commented by almost all working groups during the workshop and we have been observing it throughout the management of Erasmus Mundus mobilities. It is clear that "*cultural and educational training*" is needed for all interested parties, regardless if they are in Programme or Partner countries.

The selection of the grantees may also pose several problems both in European and non-European universities. There are many factors to be taken into account creating a multi-parameter function for the selection of applicants that is usually hard to handle efficiently. That is why the creation of different applications per country was suggested. The need for information and training of the partners is considered a possible solution to some of the above problems as well as of any misundestandings between coordinators (EU Universities) and Partners (non-EU Universities).

From the administrative point of view, visa is usually a consuming task in some countries given the lack of political and social stability in several regions of the world, the refugees issue and the upcoming cautiousness towards citizens of certain countries, even though they apply to travel under the umbrella of Erasmus+, a well-known and trustworthy programme. In Aristotle University, we have been striving to achieve a satisfactory level of communication with the Greek consular authorities abroad. As a whole, they are now well informed about student and staff mobility

programmes and they facilitate as much as possible students and staff applying for visas to Greece. The same goes for domestic immigration services with who we are in contact constantly.

We expect that the second version of Erasmus+ ICM programme 2016-18 will run more smoothly. Improvements and simplifications have been provided both by the National Agency and the European Commission that are expected to promote further the programme.

UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN AND ERASMUS PARTNRSHIP COOPERATION, EXPERIENCES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLEMGES

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ABSTRACT

Iran, one of the oldest and greatest civilization, is the richest energy and human resources in the Middle East. University of Tehran as the first and leading academic comprehensive institution in Iran has a great impact in all aspects of higher education and research in the country. Internationalization is one of the main objective of University of Tehran. The early cooperation between University of Tehran and ERASMUS starts in 2006 with student exchange program and has been continued under different ERASMUS programs such as SALAM 1& 2, and MARHABA 1& 2. The ERASMUS + program (2014-2020) focuses on joint research projects between European and non-European universities. The cooperation between University of Tehran and European partners under ERASMUS + program seems to be a unique opportunity to discover and develop for academic research upgrading academic ties and building capacity for future relations. This paper presents the importance of cooperation between University of Tehran and ERASMUS+ describing the opportunities and challenges for such cooperation.

IRAN: A HISTORIC AND ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE

Iran, one of the oldest and greatest civilizations of the world, is the richest human and energy resources in the Middle East. Iran plateau was inhabited by human race from early days of life on the planet back to over several hundred thousand years

ago. Iran's history as a country and a united nation begins 26 centuries ago with Median Empire and then continues to Achaemenid Persian Empire uniting several nations together.

The cultural, economical, and geographical importance of Iran, as a major civilization, has been preserved form early stages of ancient civilization up to present. Currently, Iran with population of 80 million people, 60% of whom are under the age of 30 is among the youngest countries in the world. The total number of university students in Iran is close to 5 millions with a female ratio of 50%. The Number of skilled graduates from universities and higher education institutes in Iran is over 700,000. After Russia and USA Iran is the third country in number of graduating engineering students. [1]

The young and highly educated human resources in the country are not the only assets that have made the country unique; Iran enjoys a vast natural, energy and raw material resources as well as a strategic geopolitical location in the Middle East. The infrastructure of the country is reasonably in a good shape with numerous functional land, sea and air routes and ports making Iran ready for any economic and cultural partnership. The mentioned characteristics makes Iran as prominent choice of prosperous partnership for European countries and for a long term fruitful cooperation in many areas including but not limited to academic, tourism, cultural, and economic sectors; such cooperation (Iran and Europe) would benefit all parties with positive prospect of continuous development, understanding and harmony.

UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN (UT), A PIONEER IN IRANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Education in Iran dates back to the ancient times when the Academy of Gondishapur, one of the main scientific and educational institutions in Sasanian era which was established on 271 CE. It is recognized as one of the most reputable medical schools during the 6th and 7th centuries. Medicine, philosophy, theology and science were among the main subjects that were taught at the school.

University of Tehran, established in 1934, is Iran's leading modern university. University of Tehran has a significant impact in all aspects of higher education and research in the country. Historically, some parts of the university were established earlier, particularly at the time of Amirkabir, the then prime minister of the Qajar dynasty, within the framework of Darul-Funun (Polytechnic) in 1851. This university was established according to the standards of the modern world. About 1.2 percent of the total students in the country are pursuing their studies at the

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[1] 233695 engineering graduates based on data of World Economic Forum 2015

University of Tehran. Based on its present status in the country, UT has been called "The mother university " and is regarded as "the symbol of higher education" in Iran. UT has confirmed its position among other Iranian Universities as is ranked as the best university in Iran in national and international rankings.

University of Tehran has 8 Campuses, 9 colleges, 46 schools/faculties, 133 departments, 55 Research Centers, 550 Labs, 124 Scientific Journals, 2190 Faculty Members and 59,448 students. The university has more than 380 International agreements and MoU's with countries. UT has membership in International Associations/Unions such as IAU, FUIW, AUAP, IASPO, IUHPS, ISC, COSPAR, IGU, IOBIC, GEM, WTO, IUGG, IFLA, ICODE. The University Ranking in Shanghai Jiao University Ranking (2014) is 301-400.

IINTERNATIONALIZATION AND UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN

Internationalization is a key strategy for sustainable development of each large university, since attracting and admitting talented students from abroad will result in promotion of the quality of education and research at universities. Also creating an appropriate academic infrastructure for admission of international students benefits the university system in all managerial and operational levels. Internationalization leads to international recognition of the university and improves its international ranking which will in turn lead to attracting more talented students. Therefore, Internationalization contributes to university development by educating the staff, faculties, and students to work, teach, learn, research, and cooperate at international level.

Internationalization also opens the window of opportunity to international research projects, joint and dual degrees, multilateral academic cooperation, student and faculty exchange, employing the research facility of other universities within a mutual frame work agreement, international funding. The indirect results of internationalization are the development of the local economy and tourism industry as well as connecting elites of nations. Furthermore, the main and long term benefit of internationalization of higher education institutions is the capacity building for peaceful, cooperative, efficient and fruitful relationship between nations.
Internationalization is one of the main objectives of University of Tehran. University of Tehran has selected internationalization as a policy to follow, a mission to conduct and an objective to achieve. University of Tehran considers internationalization as one of the most significant aspects of growth which will have an added value for its development. It will help University of Tehran to achieve the following objectives:

1. Increasing students' awareness of international issues
2. Diversifying the learning environment for students
3. Ensuring that research are informed by international and national standards
4. Enhancing research collaboration between different countries
5. Raising the international profile of the University

Therefore, University of Tehran is serious in starting and strengthening the academic relationships with European partners within mutual frame work including but not limited to ERASMUS+ .Within this mutual framework of cooperation, UT aims at admitting international students and educating them so that they can return to their country and transfer the knowledge and skills that they have acquired to their fellow countrymen. On the other hand, it is expecting to benefit the country by providing an opportunity for the young elite of the nation attending University of Tehran to participate in educational and research programs of other countries and sharing their experience with the other young researchers and vice versa.

INTERANATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS OF UT

From the beginning, University of Tehran has had an active presence in the international scene. University of Tehran had been engaged in both research and educational programs with several international partners from early 60's. University of Illinois, University of lyon, University of Geneva were among the first universities to sign mutual agreements with UT to facilitate the exchange of students and faculty members. University of Tehran has been supporting other universities to establish Iranian Studies Center, Persian Language Programs in many universities including University of Beijing, Warsaw University, University of Seoul, and university of Strasburg. UT has signed a large number of MoU's and enjoys cooperation with many universities around the world. UT is a member of several world associations and unions.

 The international activities and programs are managed by the Office of Vice-President for International Affairs. The office provides direction for University of Tehran's internationalization strategy, working closely with faculty members and administrators to advance international initiatives. The office also provides leadership for international programs and activities of the University of Tehran on all campuses, colleges, faculties, and centers and coordinates the resources essential to the growth of the university at international level. The office develops policies and plans related to regional and international cooperation between UT and other universities and international scientific centers in order to better present UT in international communities.

UNIVERSITY OF TEHRAN AND ERASMUS MUNDUS

The cooperation between University of Tehran and ERASMUS initiated in 2006 with a student and staff exchange program and has been continued under different ERASMUS MUNDOUS programs (Lot 7, Lot 8, SALAM 1& 2, and MARHABA 1& 2). The main objectives of the mentioned programs were mutual enrichment and better understanding between EU universities and University of Tehran via academic exchange leading to upgrading knowledge and skills of university students and professors at higher education. The total number of students and faculty members from the University of Tehran who have participated in the ERASMUS MUNDOUS Program are close to 100 up to present time; also 30 scholars and students from European counties have visited the University of Tehran within the frame work of ERASMUS MUNDUS.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES:

Up to present the mobility of academic people between University of Tehran and a consortium of EU universities under ERASMUS program has successfully continued. In the new program "ERASMUS+", a research project is the core for cooperation between the coordinator and partner universities. The coordinator university must be a member of EU consortium and the partner universities are selected from predetermined regional countries in the Middle East.

The cooperation can focus on Joint research between students and faculty members of the partner universities. The collaboration can also benefit from student and faculty member exchange. Also the parties can focus on offering Joint or dual degree programs for graduate students.

RESEARCH AND COOPERATION OPPORTUNITIES:

1-Energy Saving:

Iran welcomes any applicable action plan for energy saving. Since Europe is a large importer of Gas & Oil from Russia and Middle East, Europeans have had a very good experience with that issue, and it is believed a close cooperation on the subject is beneficial both for Iran and Europe since Iran can be a major Energy supplier for east and south parts of Europe.

Energy plays a critical rule in development of any country in the world. Since the universal demand for energy is growing and the available resources for fossil energy is limited, the energy security remains as one of the most important global future challenges. Therefore, effective and practical steps for energy saving as well as using renewable energy are the solutions to the facing challenge of energy security. Also,

the global warming and the world pollution are both affected directly by fossil energy consumption indicating the importance of energy saving and renewable energy usage.

Middle East including Iran is one of the most important resources for crude Oil and Natural Gas in the world (up to 50%). The availability of low cost Oil and Gas has raised the energy consumption intensity in the middle east, especially in Iran, far beyond the developed countries. The road transportation, power generation and transmission, air conditioning, water purification, lighting, and growing luxurious living style are among the important energy consumption factors in the middle east and Iran. Giving the fact that the Oil and Gas export are the backbone of the economy in the middle east (including Iran) the considerable increasing rate of fossil fuel consumption in this region is not in the direction of the energy security both for the region and the world. Considering the availability of fossil energy in Iran at relatively low price, the energy efficiency in residential (both urban and country side), transportation, and industrial sectors is well below the international norms. Also, the cheap energy price in last decades has developed inappropriate energy consumption habits of the society contributing to low energy efficiency of the region. Those factors limit the economical growth of that region, damage the environment and reduce the export capacity of crude oil and natural gas. Explicitly saying, the reduction of fossil energy consumption growth rate is necessity for Iran.

We want to find the effective and applicable solutions for energy saving in Iran using European experience to reduce Oil and Gas consumption growth rate. Part of the solutions are achievable both by increasing the energy efficiency and replacing the fossil energy with renewable energies. Also, special national and/or regional energy saving oriented cultural programs can certainly change the energy consumption habits of the society contributing to the outcome of the project. Therefore designing and proposing such energy saving programs are included in this project.

At the same time, there is a great potential for renewable sources of energies such as solar and wind energies in Iran to replace fossil energy usage. Therefore, finding the solutions for energy saving in Iran and becomes a critical task to conduct.

2-Environment and Water and Food Security:

If we do not breath air for 3 minutes, if we do not drink water for 3 days, and if we do not eat for 3 weeks, It will be impossible for us to live after. Therefore, the environment is a critical issue for any society to have a sustainable development. Industrial revolution has started in Europe in 18th century and despite eye catching progress in science, technology, and living standard, environment of European countries had been damaged seriously via man manipulation of nature and several wars in the continent. This is the exact situation that we face today in Iran and Middle East. It is believed the people's mindset and culture are the first and most effective

factors to save the Environment. Advance European technologies are the second factors to employ for save the environment. Academic cooperation can play positive and effective role on that regard.

Water is another important issue in Iran and Middle East. Many believe, the main future source of conflicts in the region will be water not energy. Iran is located in relatively hot and dry part of the world and has a crucial need for water for its fast growing society. Hopefully, Iran as a country with large mountains (roughly 30% of the country is paved by mountains) has good water resources over and under the ground. However, reduced precipitation, ineffective agricultural usage, lack of water saving culture and the development of urban areas in dry parts of the country have put the water security in the country on high alert. Subjects such as water saving, management, and purification are well suited for any joint research project.

Food security is one of the most important welfare indexes in each community that is main in ensuring human health. It refers to the physical and economical access to enough food for growth and health of the people. Although the developed countries have high food security, the most developing countries do not have adequate food security and therefore, there are food shortages and famine in some area resulted in jeopardized the country's sustainable development.

The use of certain technologies such as biotechnologies for increasing the volume of food products especially agricultural products makes high food security. One of the biotechnology tools that are being considered is the production of transgenic or genetically modified (GM) foods. GM foods are genetically engineered with the addition of specific genes resulted in genetic sequence changes. It is mainly aimed to increase the production volume and economic efficiency as well as resistance to pests in agricultural crops such as soybean, maize, oilseeds, wheat, rice, potatoes, etc.

Some of the important developed countries including USA, India, Canada, and China are the main GM food producers and therefore their food security related to increasing these kinds of foods. But, in some developing countries such as Iran, this technology tool is not common so far and therefore, there is shortage of agriculture products in some provinces and therefore, a large amount of corns such as maize, wheat and rice are imported from foreign countries that this could decrease the capital economic of our country. Therefore, development of GM food technology in this country need investigation and assessment in this field.

The joint research projects on main agricultural products including plants, including rice, wheat, and maize will be welcomed by University of Tehran. In other words, the main goal is development of large-scale planting of GM varieties suitable for the production of indigenous and appropriate crops to the climate and geography of Iran

and distributes them among farmers, thereby increasing the volume of agricultural production and ultimately improves the food security in Iran.

3-Accreditation of engineering education programs at University of Tehran

Engineering universities and colleges in Iran educate up to 230000 engineers each year putting the country at the 3rd place in the world after USA and Russia in terms of number of the graduated engineers. Also, Iran is the leading country in engineering education in the Middle East and Middle Asia both in terms of the diversity of engineering disciplines and number of engineering graduates. University of Tehran which is the pioneer university in Iran and one of the main leading academic institutions in engineering education in the country currently holds the 50th rank worldwide based on US News. Despite the important role of Iranian engineering education in the world, none of the engineering education programs in Iran has been accredited by internationally recognized accreditation institutions so far. Considering the importance of engineering education for industrial development in Iran and the unique role of University of Tehran in the country and worldwide, the accreditation of engineering education programs at University of Tehran becomes a strategic goal.

We would like to accredit the engineering education programs at University of Tehran with the help of ERASMUS+; therefore University of Tehran can lead the country as the internationally accredited engineering education institution serving the rest of the engineering universities in Iran in achieving similar goal.

Such accreditation will have expected impacts as the followings:

1. Improving the quality of engineering education in University of Tehran and consequently in the country.

2. Improving the international recognition of University of Tehran in the area of engineering education.

3. Facilitating the academic exchange of engineering students and faculties between University of Tehran and other universities all around the world especially European universities.

4. Facilitating the recruitment and admission of international engineering students especially form Middle East and Middle Asia.

5. Upgrading the research and other academic cooperation between University of Tehran and other universities especially European universities.

6. Paving the road for accreditation of other disciplines and programs at University of Tehran.

4-Other Research Topics:

Iran as an ancient and rich cultural country has a great potential in Arts, Archeology & Architecture, Human and Social sciences including education, history, literature, philosophy, theology, languages, etc … Also Iran has had a brilliant record in basic sciences (Medicine, Math, Astrology, Chemistry, Physics and etc …). Therefore each of the mentioned areas can be selected as joint research projects with University of Tehran and European partner universities. Also, University of Tehran is a comprehensive university providing unique opportunities for cooperation in all academic disciplines not limited the aforementioned subjects as joint research projects based on any common interests within the frame work of ERASMUS+.

CHALLENGES IN COOPERATION WITH EUROPEAN COUNTERPART UNIVERSITIES

Any cooperation including international partners faces challenges regardless of the mutual interests and good will of the involved parties. In the cooperation with European countries over the last decade, we faced the following challenges:

1. Little experience in conducting joint research activities and offering educational dual/joint degrees with European universities

2. Different cultures of cooperation and languages of the partners making the cooperation more challenging

3. Political issues and international relations between the countries adversely affecting the international academic relationship

4. Limitations imposed by political issues on Iran, including issuing visa, financial considerations, money transfer, and …..

5. Complexity of application process, the time consuming nature of preparing proposals and differences in the writing conventions

6. Lack of information on how to prepare the proposal and at the same time no constructive feedback on the proposals submitted to the Erasmus program

7. Inappropriate regional grouping: Iran, Iraq and Yemen are placed in one group.

8. Large number of partners suggested by ERASMUS+ makes the cooperation between the coordinator and partners challenging and inconclusive

9. The current funding assigned to the projects limits the resulted impacts of the projects seriously

10. Lack of an overall strategy of cooperation for partnerships making communication between parties complicated

11. Inertia of faculty members to engage in collaborative research and projects

Lessons learned

1. The need for internal evaluation
2. The need to identify important targets for future collaboration and connection
3. Developing an overall strategy for partnerships
4. Exploring local environment to find out opportunities to enhance cooperation

CONCLUSION

University of Tehran, a leading academic higher education institute in Iran, is interested in developing strong partnership with European counterparts including ERASMUS+ programs. University of Tehran believes it can play a central role as main coordinator of Iranian universities with European coordinators and partners. The good record of international cooperation of the University of Tehran, especially within the framework of Erasmus programs, with European Universities opens a new chapter in Iranian-European academic affairs. University of Tehran as a comprehensive university provides a promising capacity of cooperation in all academic disciplines. Energy, environment, water, food, archeology, human and basic sciences, arts, architecture and literature, etc, as well as accreditation of academic programs are among the main UT favored topics for joint research projects within the frame work of ERASMUS+.

Finding mutual research interests, coordinating between several partners in multi-disciplinary research frame work, sharing strategy of the research funds between partners, solving the cultural and other cooperation issues … are among the main challenges facing University of Tehran in ERASMUS + cooperation.

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ERACON CONGRESS AND EXHIBITION 2017

AN ONLINE PROGRAM TO PREPARE STUDENT MOBILITY AT THE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we present an online program which has been developed at the University Clermont Auvergne (FRANCE) to prepare student mobility in European countries (at the bachelor and master degrees). This project has been funded by the Erasmus consortium of Clermont-Ferrand. It has already been used by almost 100 students in two years with success.

INTRODUCTION

Thanks to the development of exchanges programs (among which ERASMUS+ in Europe), mobility periods are becoming frequent for students in higher education, in the form of semesters or internships made abroad. The linguistic and technical competences, but also the soft skills acquired during those experiences are valued in many research works. For instance, the French ERASMUS+ agency clearly emphasizes the capacity to solve problems, the adaptation faculty, the organizational competences or the curiosity. Nevertheless, the impact of such international exchanges on vocational integration is not so obvious. It is even questioned in recent research works (Schomburg et Teichler, 2008), in a context where the development of skills is essential.

Indeed, as far as the education and training context is concerned, it should be kept in mind that the approach by competences is central to people management as much in the business world as in the field of education and training. There are many procedures for validating and recognizing competences. At the French University first, portfolios enable students to list all the competences validated during their educational process (Aubret et al, 2012; Beaupère, Bosse, Lemistre, 2014). In firms,

frameworks compile all the competences workers should have to perform a job (Jarnias & Oiry, 2013). And Europe also has its own tool: the Europass Mobility, which "records the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country"[2]. In all those tools, transversal competences coexist with disciplinary competences, which have been a relevant object for researchers for a long time, when transversal competences have been enjoying less formal recognition (Aubret & Gilbert, 2003; Beaupère, Bosse, Lemistre, 2014; Retour, 2005; Tardif & Dubois, 2013). However, for the last years, studies and tools dedicated to the soft skills have multiplied. We can cite the guide for the assessment of transversal competencies in the professional context proposed by the
AEFA[3]. Moreover, in the context of international mobility, best use and recognition of such transversal competences is as essential for young people as it is for recruiters, as the European Commission emphasised in a study carried out in September 2014.

As a consequence, it appears that the link between international mobility and competences acquisition needs to be reaffirmed and confirmed. The first step could be to accompany students in their international mobility in order to increase its efficiency. In such a context, two researchers of University Clermont Auvergne (France), Cecilia Brassier-Rodrigues and Catherine Boutin-Aurine, decided to work on a program dedicated to the preparation of students' mobility in order to facilitate their acquisition of skills and increase their employability. This project has been funded by the Erasmus Consortium of Clermont-Ferrand[4] and has been developed to accompany students doing an internship abroad. In this paper, we present the general design of the online program and the three steps that compose it (before, during and after the mobility).

PRESENTATION OF THE ONLINE PROGRAM

The format and the language used to develop the program dedicated to the preparation of the students' mobility were the two first decisions we took. Since the beginning, the choice for an online tool has been made quite naturally. First, the campus of Clermont-Ferrand is quite big and organizing physical sessions would have been complicated. Second, the students are not doing their internship at the same period. As a consequence, the online option gives the necessary flexibility for the program to target a higher number of students. The Moodle platform, already used by the University Clermont Auvergne, has been chosen and an online class has been created. Each time a student from the Consortium of Clermont-Ferrand is given

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[2] https://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/documents
[3] Agenda Européen pour la Formation des Adultes
[4] This consortium is made of the following institutions of higher education of Clermont-Ferrand: University Clermont Auvergne, SIGMA Clermont, VetAgro Sup, École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Clermont-Ferrand.

an Erasmus grant to do his internship, he/she is enrolled in this class. Since then, he/she can benefit from the online program.

Concerning the language, we selected the national one (French in the present situation) for a simple reason: it is essential that the students understand everything in the content of the program to take an advantage from it.

Figure 1: Presentation of the homepage of the online program

When the student arrives on the homepage, he/she finds a presentation of the program, with an explanation of the project, its goals and the benefits he/she can gain from its use. He/She is also told how to navigate on the program. Then, the student is invited to register his/her profile (name, dates and place of internship, firm, mission) in order to become a member of the online community.

Figure 2: An example of profile

In the last part of the presentation of the program, the student can fulfill a cultural positioning test in order to discover the efforts he/she has to do to be ready to go abroad.

After this presentation, the student has access to the three steps of the program named before, during and after the mobility.

STEP 1 – BEFORE THE MOBILITY

Before they do a mobility abroad, students think that they will mainly improve their linguistic skills through this experience. When they are interviewed just after their mobility, the number of benefits they associate with it has increased. And when the students are interviewed several years after doing their mobility they recognize they have developed and acquired a large number of competences during their mobility, not only linguistic or technical, but also social skills (Brassier-Rodrigues, 2015).

Table 1: A synthesis of the competences acquired by students during their mobility (Brassier-Rodrigues, 2015)

Competences related to knowledge and know-how	Competences related to social behavior
1. Linguistic competences 2. Academic knowledge 3. Technical knowledge 4. Learning methods 5. Working methods	*Competences related to self-development* 6. Knowledge of one's own culture 7. Knowledge of the host culture 8. Empathy, listening, tolerance, patience 9. Curiosity, openness 10. Organization, rigor, sense of responsibility 11. Adaptation 12. Self-confidence, independence, tenacity, autonomy
	Relational competences 13. Interpersonal communication: language and linguistic skills 14. Social integration: inside a group, networking, etc.

These results suggest that students are not aware of the number of competences they can acquire during their mobility before they do it. As a consequence, this period will be less efficient in the short-term even though the objective for a student is to increase his employability with such experiences. As a consequence, the first step of the program, called "before the mobility", is intended to prepare students before they go abroad in order to optimize their experience. To achieve this objective, two topics have been developed: the cultural chock and the competences. We think that helping students understand the different steps of the cultural chock they can face during the first weeks of their experience abroad enables them to know how to react more rapidly in order to be operational. And concerning the competences, we define different soft skills students can begin acquiring during the mobility and we help them identify some activities they can do inside or outside the internship to develop them.

In order to make students be more familiar with these two topics, we used different media. For each topic, a series of several videos (from 3 to 7 minutes) accompanying slide shows helped us defining the concepts and presenting the central ideas in an attractive way.

Figure 3: An example of a video accompanying a slideshow

For each topic, also, the students were proposed several exercises to apply the theory and put it in practice. They make them individually and for which they get a personal feedback.

Figure 4: An example of an exercise done online

When all the activities related to a particular topic are fulfilled, the students receive a digital badge. When they have all the badges, they are ready to go abroad.

Figure 5: Presentation of the digital badges the students can get

STEP 2 – DURING THE MOBILITY

The goal of the second step of the program is to accompany students during their internship to help them put in practice what they learnt during the previous step (before the mobility). It concerns the cultural chock and the acquisition of competences. To do so, students are invited to participate to some collaborative activities called *wikis*. These are some web documents that can be modified by the students enrolled in the program.

Figure 6: An example of a wiki

As soon as a student begins his/her internship, he/she has access to all the wikis and he/she can make his contribution to one or another when he/she wants. Previously, the students have been distributed among different groups depending on the country they were doing their internship. The goal is to form some homogeneous groups, inside which students living in a quite close cultural environment could exchange experiences and good practices. Thus, a student can contribute in his/her group, by fulfilling the wikis and commenting the contributions of the members of his group.

He/She has access to the contributions of the other groups but he/she cannot comment them.

Seven wikis have been put online. A first wiki introduced the period of internship by asking the students to describe their first encounter with the culture. Then three wikis for the topic of cultural chock and three others for the topic of competences were accessible to the students. Such activities as describing a stereotype, listing the activities done to acquire some skills or begin filling the Europass mobility tool were proposed. They accompany the students during all their internship and help them put in practice what they have seen in the content on the online class, before the mobility.

STEP 3 – AFTER THE MOBILITY

When the students are back to France, the goal of the program is to help them value their experience. Two activities are proposed.

The first activity is the organization of an exchange with a recruiter from a regional firm. As soon as the internship is finished, we collect from the students all the questions they want to ask him/her. We transmit them to the recruiter who answers and we put this online. In parallel, the recruiter records a video in which he/she explains what international experiences mean for firms and in which he/she gives the students some advice to help them enhance what they have learned during their mobility.

The second activity is related to the Europass curriculum vitae. We propose each student to make his/her own CV and to send it back to us to have a personal feedback.

CONCLUSION

For the two last years, all the students of the University Clermont Auvergne who have benefited from an Erasmus grant to do their internship have been proposed to join the online program presented in this paper and made of three steps in order to help them prepare better their mobility: before, during and after the internship. Before the mobility, through online classes, cases and exercises, students learn what the cultural shock is and they discover the different skills they can acquire during their experience (technical, linguistic but also soft-skills). During the mobility, students are asked to do different online activities, related to the cultural shock and the skills acquisition (for example presenting a picture or a video illustrating a stereotype). It makes them share and confront their ideas with other students living the same experience in other countries. After the mobility, the Europass Mobility tools are presented to the students and a session is organized with a recruiter to help them understand better how they can enhance what they have learned during their

mobility. With this online program we help students become aware of the skills they develop during mobility and we create a forum of exchange among people experiencing the same things. For the two last years, around 100 students take advantage from this online program. Our goal is to convince more students to enrol in the program, but as it is not compulsory not all of them do it. Next step is to share this experience with European partners to improve our practices.

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RESUME

Dans cet article, nous présentons un programme qui prépare les étudiants à la mobilité dans les pays européens (au niveau licence et master). Il a été développé sur une plateforme en ligne par deux enseignantes-chercheurs à l'Université Clermont Auvergne Ce projet a bénéficié d'un financement du Consortium Erasmus stages de Clermont-Ferrand. Depuis deux ans, il a été utilisé par près de 100 étudiants, qui en ont fait une évaluation positive.

RAISING STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS ABOUT ERASMUS+ MOBILITY ACTIVITIES AND THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ERASMUS OFFICE

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ABSTRACT

Celebrating the 30 years of Erasmus, it is considered important to raise awareness of the students about Erasmus Mobility activities. Gazi University acknowledges the significance of the Erasmus+ activities for internationalisation. Therefore Gazi University Erasmus Coordination Office conducted a survey among 150 students. The survey was prepared and applied to the students before (1) and after (2) "Information day about Erasmus+ Student Mobility". The goals of the survey are; i. to raise the Erasmus Programme awareness of the students, ii. To introduce and give information on the Erasmus + program to students, iii. To evaluate the efficiency of the Erasmus Office with respect to its duty, presenting information about Erasmus mobility and increasing participation initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Gazi University which is located in Ankara with 19 faculties, 7 postgraduate institutes, 3 High Schools and 5 Vocational High Schools was founded in 1926. Having 80,000 and 4000 Academic Staff, Gazi University is one of the largest Universities in Turkey.

Erasmus programme has been carried out at the University since 2004. It is considered an important part of the Internationalisation strategy of Gazi University which is stated at the policy statement as "Gazi University determines the higher education institutions to be cooperated taking academic criteria of subject areas into account without considering their geographical locations. Its main focus is staff and

student mobility which is a significant part of internationalization. It stimulates students and staff to participate in international mobility activities, supports them without setting any type of priority. Every student enrolled in short, first, second and third cycles has equal rights and opportunities regarding study and placement mobility". The Erasmus Coordination Office is the central unit that is responsible for Erasmus+ Mobility projects. Currently, there are 325 Interinstitutional Agreements with 26 programme, 13 partner countries.

Erasmus Coordination Office (ECO) organizes "Erasmus+ Information Day" (EID) for students in the beginning of each academic semester in order to introduce and promote Erasmus+ Mobility Activities (MA). At the last EID, ECO has conducted a survey throughout 150 students (First graders and PhD). The survey consists of 21 questions and it was applied twice to the same group before (Survey-1) and after (Survey 2) the EID. Survey-1 and Survey -2 have the same questions in order to assess the effectiveness of our presentations. The questions are varied from the definition of Erasmus+ mobility to the procedure of recognition, covering every aspect of Erasmus Student Mobility.

Two of the questions were open ended. The questions were prepared specifically to reach our aims. Our aims are "to raise the awareness of students about Erasmus+ Mobility" (9 questions), "to assess the effectiveness of 'Erasmus Information Day'" (5 questions), "to evaluate the efficiency of ECO" (5 questions). This paper has three sections, these sections are corresponded to our aims. The distribution of the questions show that our main target was to promote Erasmus programmes and increase participation to the programme.

In the following three sections we have analysed some of the questions which we find more significant for this paper.

AIM 1: RASING AWARENESS

As it is stated in the Erasmus University Charter, one of the obligations of the University is "to ensure equal access and opportunities to mobile participants from all backgrounds". Erasmus Coordination Office is the main and central body that manages Erasmus+ mobility activities at Gazi University. It is Office's duty to ensure that all the students and staff are informed about the programme and well prepared before the mobility. Erasmus Information Day that are organised in the beginning of each academic semester is one of the tools to maintain the promotion of Erasmus+ Mobility. The following question in this section are prepared to show the basics of the programme. The questions are informative questions, giving information about the basics of the programme, recognition procedure and the new concepts such as Online Linguistic Support and graduate internship.

Question 1-From where can you get Information about Erasmus+ Student Mobility?

    A) Student Affairs Office
    B) Dean's Office
    C) Erasmus Coordination Office

We wanted to make clear that the main body which gives the correct information about Erasmus+ mobility activities is ECO. In the first survey 0,67% of the students picked answer A, 1,34% of students picked answer B, 97% of the students picked the correct answer C. In the second survey 99,33% of the students picked the correct answer.

Question 2- What are Erasmus + Student Mobility Activities?

    A) Study and Traineeship
    B) Arts Course
    C) Sports Tournament

Before the EID 94,63% of the students picked the correct answer A. After EID, 97 % of the students gave the correct answer.

Question 3- Can recent graduates do Erasmus+ Mobility Activities?
    A) No
    B) Yes
    C) Traineeship Only

Recent graduates can do traineeship if only they are selected before graduation. We believe that this new feature of the programme is very progressive. In previous years fourth graders were losing their interest to the programme due to lack of time. Traineeship mobility for recent graduates expand the students' employability opportunities. We consider and results of the survey show that this aspect can be promoted more. In the first survey 65,99% of the students know about this new feature. However this percentage raised to 76,67 after our presentation.

Question 4- Does traineeship students get ECTS credits?
    A) No
    B) Yes, unless they are recent graduates
    C) Yes

Another important aspect of the traineeship is recognition, the students are not aware of the fact that Erasmus internships are recognised by ECTS. Erasmus University Charter states that "*Ensure that full recognition for satisfactorily completed activities of study mobility and where possible traineeships in terms of credits awarded (ECTS*

or compatible system)" At Gazi University the Erasmus traineeships are recognised either as compulsory internship which is embedded in the curriculum or as a selected course and they both are recognised by ECTS.

Question 5- Is language support provided during Erasmus+ Mobility?
    A) No
    B) Language classes are organised.
    C) Online Linguistic Support (OLS) is available.

OLS is also a new element of the programme. We think that the opportunity to improve their language or learning a new one would be attractive for the students and increase their participation to the programme. The chance to improve their language skills is encouraging for students if they are not confident enough. In the first survey only 19,73% of the students picked answer C while 45,77% of the students could give the correct answer C. Unfortunately even though after the EID most of the students were not aware of OLS. ECD should stress more about this tool.

AIM 2: TO ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ERASMUS INFORMATION DAY

Assessment of the effectiveness of 'Erasmus Information Day' is our second aim. As it is mentioned in the first part of this paper promotion is an important task and EID is a significant tool. It is also important for us to make it efficient enough to serve our purposes. The second survey ensured assessment to this end. Some of the questions were prepared for self-evaluation. In this section of the survey the questions are more deductive. We directed the students to the correct answer in order to make the information clear. The questions are about student selection calendar and selection procedure.

Question 1- How many Erasmus Student Mobility selections are done in each academic year?

    A) Both mobility for study and traineeship selections are done once a year.
    B) Traineeship selection is done at least twice a year, in the beginning of each semester, Selection for study is done once a year.
    C) Selections are done every other year.

It is significantly important to sufficiently announce the selection calendar for Erasmus Mobility activities. In the EID presentation we deliberately stress the application and selection procedure. The correct answer for the above question is B. In the first survey 63,31% students knew the answer. After the presentation 76,19% students picked the answer B.

Question 2- The selection for Erasmus Mobility for studies refers to the next academic year's spring or fall semester depending on student's choice.

    A) True
    B) False
    C) No Idea

The selection for Erasmus Study Mobility which is done in the beginning of the spring semester in each academic year, refers to the next academic year's spring or fall semester depending on the student's choice. 38,93% of the students had no idea about this question before the presentation. After the presentation 90,67% got the correct answer .

Question 3-'If I am selected to be an Erasmus student for study I can pick any University to go'

    A) True
    B) False
    C) No Idea

With the above question we tried to make clear that Erasmus+ study "mobility can only be carried out within the framework of prior agreements between institutions" We found out that 86,49% of the students were aware of the necessity of interinstitutional agreements before the presentation. In the second seuvey the rate reached to ratio reached to 92%.

AIM 3: TO EVALUATE THE EFFICIENCY OF ERASMUS COORDINATION OFFICE

In the third section we elaborate the questions regarding the aim which is to evaluate the efficiency of Erasmus Coordination Office. As the promoter of the Erasmus programme we target to increase the number of students participating to mobility activities. Therefore announcing application procedure and how to access for further information about the programme are vital for sustainability. This section covers Application procedure, information about ECO website and importance of departmental coordinators.

Question 1-How to apply for Erasmus+ mobility?

    A) To the faculties
    B) Online application
    C) Apply online and deliver application form in hand

For the last six years ECO at Gazi University has been using web based software for student mobility applications. However, the International Offices at universities in charge of Erasmus+ mobility is obliged to keep all participants in hardcopy within the student files. Even in the first survey over 90% students knew that both online application and submission of application form in hardcopy are necessary step to take to be an eligible applicant.

Question 2- Where can you find information about Erasmus at your department?

> A) Head of department
> B) Department Secretary
> C) Erasmus Departmental Coordinator

As it is mentioned before in the paper ECO is the central unit responsible for Erasmus+ Mobility activities. However, there are Erasmus departmental coordinators are entrusted to carry on academic aspects of the programmes such as, deciding institution to make interinstitutional agreements, updating the course catalogue and providing consultancy to students about courses to choose prior to the study mobility. The departmental coordinators are also entitled to examine the eligibility of the organisations at which the students do their traineeships. The results of the both surveys show that the students know about departmental coordinators; in the first survey 91,95% students and in the second survey 95% students mentioned that they can get information about Erasmus+ mobility from Erasmus Departmental Coordinators.

Question 3- Do you find the ECO website sufficient?

> A) Yes
> B) No
> C) No Idea

ECO website of the University is the main gate for students get information about Erasmus mobility activities within the University. All the announcements, application guides and necessary information and documents for applicants and documents can be found on the website. Unfortunately in the first survey only 39% of the students mentioned that they find the page sufficient. Although we have presented the website during the info day, in the second survey the ratio rise up to only 43%.

CONCLUSION

Our primary goal was to introduce Erasmus programme to the students therefore in conclusion to our survey analysis, we found out that the number of information days should be increased. Websites about Erasmus+ mobility activities including ours are

very informative however, interactive presentations are also very effective for the students especially newcomers to make the programme become known.

Our experiment was important to understand the effectiveness of our presentations; the evaluated duty of ECO was promotion of Erasmus+ mobility activities. The survey provided us a self-evaluation of Gazi University Erasmus Coordination Office and data on the level of student awareness about Erasmus+ student mobility activities. Through the data analysis attained from the survey it is concluded that Erasmus+ website of the University should be redesigned by enriching informative and eye-catching objects t to be more user-friendly. It will be more useful organise more interactive and efficient information days for the students and the new aspects of Erasmus mobility activities such as; Online Linguistic Support (OLS).Traineeships for graduate students should be more emphasized in order to increase participation to the programme. Majority of the students don't know that they get ECTS if they do the Erasmus internship so we think that it should be publicised more. In future, further surveys should be conducted with larger sample size. Data obtained from these surveys will give contribution the improvement of Erasmus +programs.

ERASMUS + TRAINEE-SHIPS - EVOLVING INTO A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

Erasmus student and staff mobility, with its core focus on transnational academic cooperation and skills development, stand as a key element in the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs.
The development overt time of the students' mobility for training in the last years has become essential in the process to improve the skills needed on the labor market, thus increasing employability and ultimately reducing the rate of unemployment among young people.
Taking account that only about one third of employers could find employees with the right skills on the labor market, new graduates and higher institutions alike need to enrich their potential to connect to the market requirements. Taking a mobility abroad offers the possibility to the young people to experience different working contexts and different relational context that are very important in the process of developing new skills and competencies. Also, connecting directly to the needs of foreign employers gives to the future graduates the basic information regarding a self-development strategy within their professional line of work. Finally, acquisition of intercultural competences, developing the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes‖ (Deardorff, 2006), becomes a part of a broader educational strategy that offers the possibility for young people to work and live within a globalized and complex world, such as the one today.

EMPLOYABILITY – CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

In recent years, different actors within the field of labor market and labor policies like employers, policy makers or different experts have been putting pressure on educators to deliver educational outcomes that are relevant from the point of view of the students's lives and labor market demands. This different approach can be seen

through study programmes that are connecting with real learning needs, that are delivering skills useful in the workplace context such as: critical thinking, communication, and creative problem solving. Still there are a lot of concerns that the nowadays education systems fail to provide to the students what they need to really become "innovative thinkers" and "engaged citizens".

One of the most relevant instruments considered to measure the degree in which an education system or institution is able to provide an adaptive education to the labor market needs is considered the employability of young graduates.

Employability was considered a relatively obscure concept a decade ago. However, in present days it has a central place in labor market policies all over Europe and worldwide. It becomes one of the four main pillars of the European Employment Strategy.

It was extensively debated as being a defining theme of the Extraordinary European Council on Employment (the so-called Jobs Summit), which took place in Luxembourg in November 1997 (CEC, 1999). Also from the point of view of European Employment Strategy, formulated in 2003, the promotion of employability for young people, unemployed and disadvantages groups was and still remain an important goal. Europe 2020 strategy has employability as a pillar of its approach, promoting investment in human capital and the sustainability of lifelong learning.
In the international arena employability has the similar emphasis. It is sufficient to recall the importance of this issue on the United Nations agenda where, after the middle of 1990s the OECD has begun to talk about the need to have more active labor policies in order to reduce the dysfunctional division' between the working population and the unemployed.

Employability can be seen as" the possession by an individual of the qualities and competencies required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers and thereby help to realize his or her aspirations and potential in work (CBI, 1999, p. 1). In the same time employability means the development of skills and adaptable workforces in which all those capable of work are encouraged to develop the skills, knowledge, technology and adaptability to enable them to enter and remain in employment throughout their working lives (HM Treasury, 1997, p. 1).

Hillage and Pollard (1998) have developed a broad-ranging definition of the concept, seeing employability as an individual's ability to gain initial employment, maintain employment, move between roles within the same organization, obtain new employment if required and (ideally) secure suitable and sufficiently fulfilling work. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labor market environment) within which they seek work (Hillage and Pollard, 1998, p. 12).

One of the most important instruments for any modern higher educational system in order to gain employability for its own students is dealing with the capacity to organize and develop a proper trainee-ship program adapted to the specific of every academic specialization. From this point of view, dealing with Erasmus trainee-ships mobilities becomes a strategic approach that connects demands and needs of employers within the European market with young people educational process and educational contents.

ERASMUS TRAINEE-SHIPS AND INTEGRATION OVER THE LABOR MARKET

In order to make a brief synthesis of the major aspects concerning the capacity of Erasmus trainee-ships mobilities to contribute to the students' integration within labor market we will emphasize results from two studies concerning this issue. First is about the study made by different partner organization under the supervision of European Commission - The Erasmus Impact Study - Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalization of higher education institutions, and second we will present partial results of a quantitative research made by Spiru Haret University Erasmus office within the university students regarding the attitudes and perceptions on trainee-ships, the impact of trainee-ships over the carrer choices and chances to have a better employability after the graduation.

The Erasmus Impact Study was comprising five online surveys conducted in 2013 and a combined sample of around 80 000 individuals (students, alumni, academic and non-academic staff, employers) from 34 countries.

In a brief, the Erasmus Impact Study shown that for students implied in trainee-ships chances to be long-term unemployed are dropping at 50% and after five years from graduation their unemployment rate is 23% lower than the students that have not been implied in such activities.

The study notes that 85% of Erasmus participants want to study or train abroad in order to enhance their employability. Also from the perspective of employers, results have indicated that 92% of employers are looking for personality traits found to be enhanced by study or training abroad, such as tolerance, confidence, problem-solving skills, curiosity, knowing one's strengths/weaknesses, and decisiveness.

Erasmus students that have been involve in mobilities are showing 42% on average better results from the point of view of this personality traits than other students.

From the point of view of direct and immediate impact upon the students' career opportunities the study was showing about 30% of the participants in training have been in the position to receive an employment offer at the enterprise where they do

their traineeship. In addition, 10% of the trainees have been able to start their own business and more than 75% of them are planning one or are willing to.

The results are very promising and become a solid ground for a continuous implication at the level of higher education institutions and their labor market partners in order to develop and implement the Erasmus mobilities concerning traineeships.

The second study we want to refer is a quantitative type research having a small sample size of 50 students from Spiru Haret University, students that have been involved or not in the last three years in a mobility type activity.

One of the first conclusion of the study was that 63% of the respondents believe they will work after the graduation within the field corresponding to the academic field of their current specialization, while 28% think they will not and 9% are undecided.
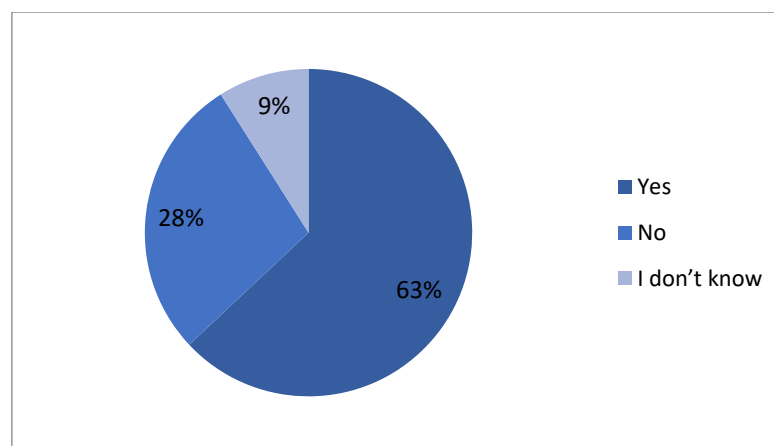
Figure no 1. The degree in which students are seeing themselves working in the same field as the specialization they will graduate.
Source: own research

Another conclusion is reffering to the barriers that students are thinking that they encounter when they are looking for a job. The answers have been measured with the help of Likert type scale and they are showing on the first place with an average score of 4.52 -the employers requirements reffering to the candidates requested experience, followed by lack of demand on labor market for the wanted job because of specific socio-economic conditions – 3,88 and lack of detailed information reffering to the desired job requirements – 3,43. As we can see the employers' requirements have a pretty big score.
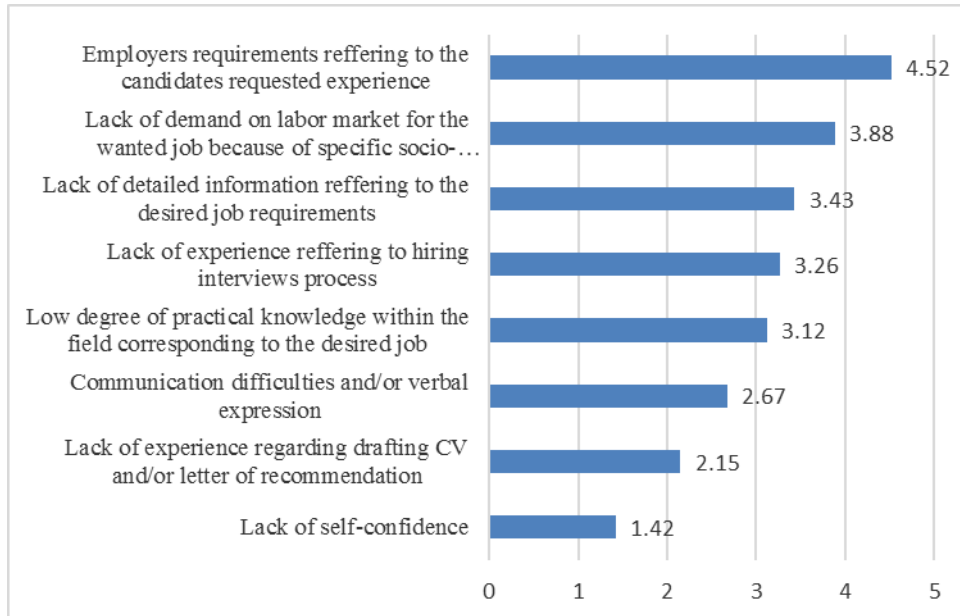
Figure no 2. Possible barriers encountered within the hiring process
Source: own research

73% of the students are considering that their chances of employment have grown after the training period, while 21% are thinking mostly yes and 6% are not decided.
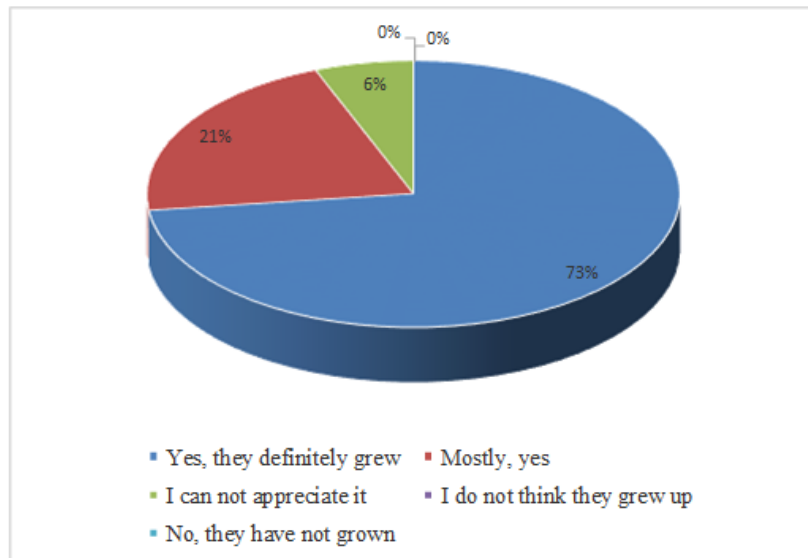
Figure no 3. The extent to which the respondents consider that their chances of employment increased in the field of study after the practical training in general and in Erasmus program in special
Source: own research

Testing the perception of the students regarding the issues that have been enhanced throughout the participation within trainee ships we can summarize the responses measured with Likert scale with 5 steps in the table below:

Table no1. Perception upon issues enhanced after trainee-ships

Enhanced issues throughout the participation within trainee ships	Average score
Increasing employment opportunities in the field of study	4,12
The ability to apply in practice the knowledge gained in the courses	4,22
Collaboration between students in the education process	3,02
Collaboration between students in teamwork	3,35
Familiarizing with the organizational climate of potential employers	4,76
Strengthen the future career decision	4,52
Learning about job search techniques	3,94
Knowing their own skills and abilities	3,73
Adaptation to and communication in a new organizational environment	4,31

Source: own research

We can observe that the students are considering becoming accustomed with organizational environment as being one of the most important achievement, followed by a better view upon their career path and decisions, and the ability to apply on a practical ground the knowledge gained also through their theoretical courses within the faculty.

Another practical result that can be summarize are dealing with the perception of employers and communication with students and they are reffering to:
- The trainee-ships are having a too short period in order that students can be familiarized with all aspects of the company's activities
- The managers have been reticent to offer some confidential information to the students regarding some strategic issues
- Managers lack of trust regarding the engagement of the students in high responsibility activities

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

The results of the studies and other literature review conclusions are showing that practical training, especially carried out in a foreign environment that can stimulate the student on a multitude of social and psychological layers is a very powerful tool useful for diminish the gap between graduates' skills and competencies and labor market requirements.

Erasmus students can benefit a lot from their mobility context because it can offer a blend of experiences that have a unique combination of work related requirements, social skills, economic and politic situations capable of enriching in the most unexpected way their life experiences.

But the challenge still remains at the level of educational systems as their managers have to adapt in a creative way the content of teaching programs to the evolution needed from the point of view of employers. Many programmes have not changed over time and much of the hard content of programmes becomes obsolete within two to three years. Also, graduates are also lacking most of the transferable (soft) skills which companies value so highly – independent thinking, initiative, creativity etc.

In future, most of the ones involved in to the development of Erasmus program have to take account of the process to better investigate the means and the ways in which employers can be better integrated within the educational process and how it can be build a functional network between former Erasmus students, teachers and administrative staff involved, employers that have been Erasmus students once and educational decision makers at the highest level.

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RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

The Erasmus+ programme is a programme with a strong brand, the realisation of which provides beneficiaries an abundance of opportunities as well as threats. Therefore, one of the most important stages of project management is (or should be) risk management.

The aim of the study is to analyse the possibility of implementation of risk management in Erasmus+ projects by beneficiaries. The presented paper relates primarily to the Erasmus+ Key Action 1 Higher Education, but the vast majority of issues can be implemented in the remaining actions of the programme. The main research problem relates to the risk management methods that are most effective in implementing international mobility projects. Within the framework of my research, I acknowledge that in realisation of such projects, there is a need to include risk management, because the awareness of possible risks is insufficient, as is evidenced by the lack of satisfactory sources for the analysed issue.

The conclusions of the study are the findings concerning the existence of multiple risk management options by organisations at a low cost, and that early risk identification will increase the probability of achieving the project's intended purpose.

KEY WORDS
Erasmus+, project management, risk management

INTRODUCTION

Erasmus+ is a complex programme, and because of this, it is necessary to focus on many aspects of the project that are many times not taken into account when

managing the project. The mere fact that the Erasmus+ programme is an EU-funded programme imposes that particular attention should be paid to the documentation being provided by the beneficiary organisation and ensures that the projects have European added value and that their effects are sustainable and measurable.

The main research problem raised in the work are the questions: What are the most common risks in Erasmus + projects, and how can they be identified? Which methods of risk management are most effective in implementing Erasmus + projects? These questions are supported by the assumption that there is currently insufficient risk management analysis of the projects investigated by the author. An attempt to answer this question is the hypothesis that current projects are likely to need to include risk management, because the awareness of possible risks is insufficient, as evidenced by the fact that there is currently no source for the project being analysed. The aim of the study is to try to answer the question in the research problem by verifying the hypothesis. Moreover, the task of the paper is to investigate the risk management capabilities of Erasmus+ projects by the beneficiaries.

THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF PROJECT RISK MANAGEMENT

In order to identify risks and present risk management techniques in Erasmus+ projects, it is necessary to provide a definition of risk in the project and know what the risk management in the project is. According to the definition provided by the Project Management Institute (PMI) in *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge* (PMBOK): *Project risk is an uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or a negative effect on at least one project objective, such as time, cost, scope or quality.* Project risk management *is the art and science of identification, analysis and risk response throughout the project life cycle and in the best interest of meeting the objectives of the project*[5].

The problem of risk management often does not garner enough attention, or it is completely overlooked; although it can contribute to the success of the project by selecting good practice, defining the scope of the project, managing the project and developing realistic schedules. The three most important elements of risk management are: risk identification, analysis and operation. The implementation of any project is risky, as there will always be some degree of uncertainty about the outcome of the project, even with the best planning.

Projects are inherently risky, as each of their features brings an amount of uncertainty to the project. The most important features of projects are: objective, specificity,

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[5] Project Management Institute, *A Guide to The Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK),* third edition, Pennsylvania, 2004, p.237-238

uniqueness, complexity, assumptions and limitations, they are subject to change and are created by people[6].

A well-organised and implemented risk management plan can greatly contribute to the success of a project. The purpose of risk management in projects is:

- better project management, responsiveness to change,
- gathering information and sharing with the stakeholder the risk of the project,
- identification and discovery of a way to address potential problems at the right time,
- increasing the likelihood and impact of favourable events,
- developing risk management strategies and plans,
- establishing risk management methods, tools and techniques to assist in the analysis and reporting of identified risk events,
- developing a common understanding of risk[7].

RISK IDENTIFICATION AND RISK MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN THE PROJECTS OF THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME

The emergence of unfavourable situations in a project cannot be completely ruled out, but there are methods that allow one to manage the risk in the project. Of key importance to project teams is the planning of risk management in each phase of the project. The PMI PMBOK guide outlines the process of risk management in six stages:

1. Risk management planning
2. Identification of risks
3. Qualitative risk analysis
4. Quantitative risk analysis
5. Scheduling risk responses
6. Monitoring and risk control[8]

When analysing risk, one needs to distinguish what will help identify the risks, determine what is happening and plan the appropriate actions.

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[6] Choudhury S., *Project Management,* Tata McGraw-Hill Education, 1988, p. 3, [in:] Trocki M., Grucza B., Ogonek K., „Zarządzanie projektami'', Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, Warszawa 2003 p. 18, see more: Trocki M., Grucza B., Ogonek K., op. cit. .,
[7] See more: Nasalski Z., Wierzejski T., Szczubełek G., Zarządzanie projektami innowacyjnymi, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, 2013, p. 93, Bentley C., *Prince 2 a Practical Handbook,* 2nd edition, Oxford, 2002
[8] See more: Project Management Institute: *A Guide….,*

Risk can be classified by its origin to external and internal. External risks are those outside of an organisation that the members of the design team have virtually no control over. Internal risk is rooted in the organisation. This can be managed to a large extent, and therefore, it needs to focus the most on it[9].

In the projects of Erasmus+ programme, you can identify the following risks:

EXTERNAL:

A) Legal, political:
- changes in taxation, which may affect the amount of scholarships received by the participants;
- visa regulations; risk of the participant not being issued a visa or complete rejection of the visa application;
- the political situation or the threat of terrorism, which prevents one from going to another country or instils fear;
- changes in the programme introduced by the European Commission / National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme.
B) Force majeure:
- weather, natural disasters; the impossibility of carrying out planned activities taking into consideration the safety of the participants;
- accidents.
C) Project partners from another organisation:
- resignation of one of the project partners;
- non-settlement of the grant awarded;
- lack of knowledge of the culture and the habits of those involved in the project.
D) Participants of the Erasmus+ programme:
- problems with recruitment; resignation of the participants;
- non-settlement of the required documentation;
- cultural, religious, ethnic differences.

INTERNAL:

A) Organisational (project team activities):
- division of responsibilities between project members;
- overseeing changes and procedures;
- inappropriate documentation;
- communication, information flow;
- recruitment schedule / incorrect scheduling;
- failure to meet the project assumptions, which may lead to a partial or total return

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[9] Szóstakowska J., Fundusze UE w praktyce: Ryzyko w projekcie, part I, http://uniaeuropejska.org/fundusze-ue-w-praktyce-ryzyko-w-projekcie-cz-i/, access to the website: 09.06.2016 r.

of the grant awarded;
- tasks too difficult to complete within the scheduled time.
B) Resources:
- the competence of those involved in the project;
- absenteeism of employees;
- language barrier in a multinational team;
- irresponsibility of project team members;
- different ideas and expectations of the project teams / conflicts within the team;
- relations between project participants.
C) Finance and Budget:
- overspending;
- not using all of the awarded grant;
- disposing of funds contrary to regulations (return of the grant to the National Agency)[10].

One of the main problems in Erasmus+ projects is the recruitment of participants into the programme. This issue will be presented utilising the example of recruitment conducted at Poznań University of Economics and Business.

Chart 1: Qualification for studies under the Erasmus+ programme at PUEB
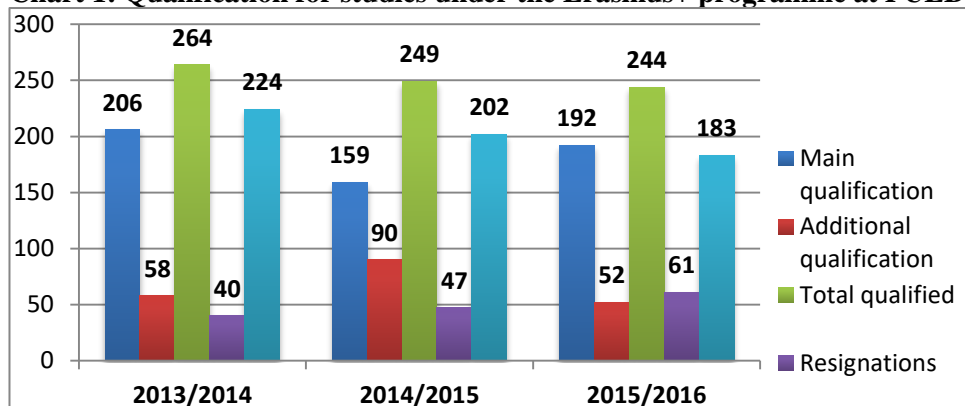
Source: own elaboration based on the data of the Research and International Relations Office of Poznań University of Economics and Business

Chart 1: *Qualification for studies under the Erasmus+ programme at PUEB* shows the number of students who were qualified for the programme [main and secondary qualification (navy blue and red), study trips completed (blue), number of cancellations (purple)]. As can be seen, year by year, the number of resignations grew. Counterweight to this negative trend partly provides additional qualification (normally held at the beginning of the academic year in October). However,

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[10] See more: Kornacka E., Krasuska W. Marcinkowska K., Michalak A., Walasek W., *Ryzyko w projektach 4,* Warszawa: Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji, 2009

additional recruitment only allows students to leave during the summer semester (which limits the choice of students and does not allow students of undergraduate studies to leave during the last semester, as this is prohibited under PUEB regulations).

Beneficiaries of the programme are important for the success of the project. From the number of participants sent abroad depends on the amount of money the organisation will receive from the National Agency in future projects, as this indicator is largely taken into account when redistributing funds. In addition to second recruitment and promotional campaigns, it is possible to transfer funds to employees. However, such a solution requires consent from the side of the National Agency; therefore, the application must be sent sooner. In the situation that there are funds remaining after the completion of the project, implementation organisations are obliged to return the funds to the National Agency. From program participants are also largely dependent on whether or not the quality objectives of the project will be met.

As can be seen from the chart above, the number of departed and qualified participants differ significantly, so it is difficult to foresee, on the basis of the past data, what will be interest in the future departures.

Another example confirming the difficulty in predicting the number of individuals willing to travel abroad is shown in Chart 2, which refers to the number of leaving students and graduates for traineeship. The number of participants in the 2014/2015 academic year increased nearly two-fold as compared to 2013/2014, which was a large surprise, as the previous years saw a downward trend.

Chart 2: Number of outgoing students from PUEB for Erasmus+ traineeships
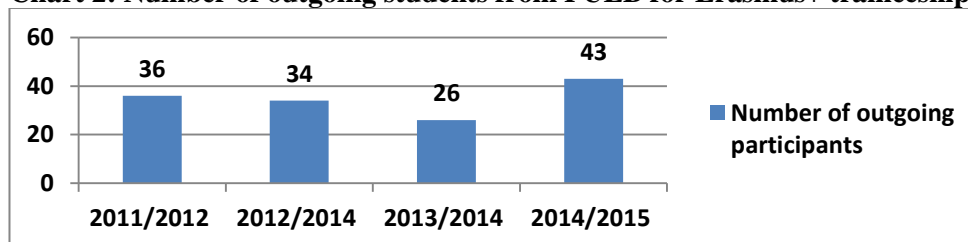
Source: own elaboration based on the data of the Research and International Relations Office of Poznań University of Economics and Business

POSSIBILITIES OF USING SELECTED TECHNIQUES IN PROJECT RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE ERASMUS + PROGRAMME

Various methods and techniques can be used at different stages of project risk management. The most important are as follows:

1. Documentation review: existing design documentation (plans, assumptions and other information that may be useful in identifying risks).
2. Techniques gathering information:
- Brainstorming - the purpose of using the method is to compile an exhaustive list of potential risks by gathering many creative ideas without evaluating them;
- Delphic method - use a knowledge group expert to solve the problem. This method assumes that the problem is more likely to be solved by a group than by one individual;
- Risk categorisation lists: lists dividing the identified risks into categories;
- interviews - interviews with experts or with experienced members of other organisations and stakeholders;
- SWOT analysis - one of the basic methods of strategic analysis of an organisation. This method allows one to examine both the organisation's interior (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) environment.

Scheme 1

An example of SWOT analysis for an institution to implement projects of Erasmus+ programme

	Strengths	Weaknesses
internal	Extensive programme offer in English High position in university rankings Highly qualified staff	Insufficient knowledge of intercultural differences and conflict resolution Little experience in international exchange projects Reluctance of part of the staff to implement projects of international exchanges
	Opportunities	**Threats**
external	University location in an attractive city Support from local authorities in promoting international exchanges	Unstable political situation Competition from other universities

Source: own elaboration

3. Control Lines:
- allows for monitoring of the progress at different stages of the project
4. Diagramming Techniques:
- Cause and Risk Diagram (Ishikawa Diagram) - This tool is useful for identifying risks and resembles fish bones. The Ishikawa diagram below shows the factors that influence the poor quality of the project[11].

Diagram 1 Ishikawa Diagram
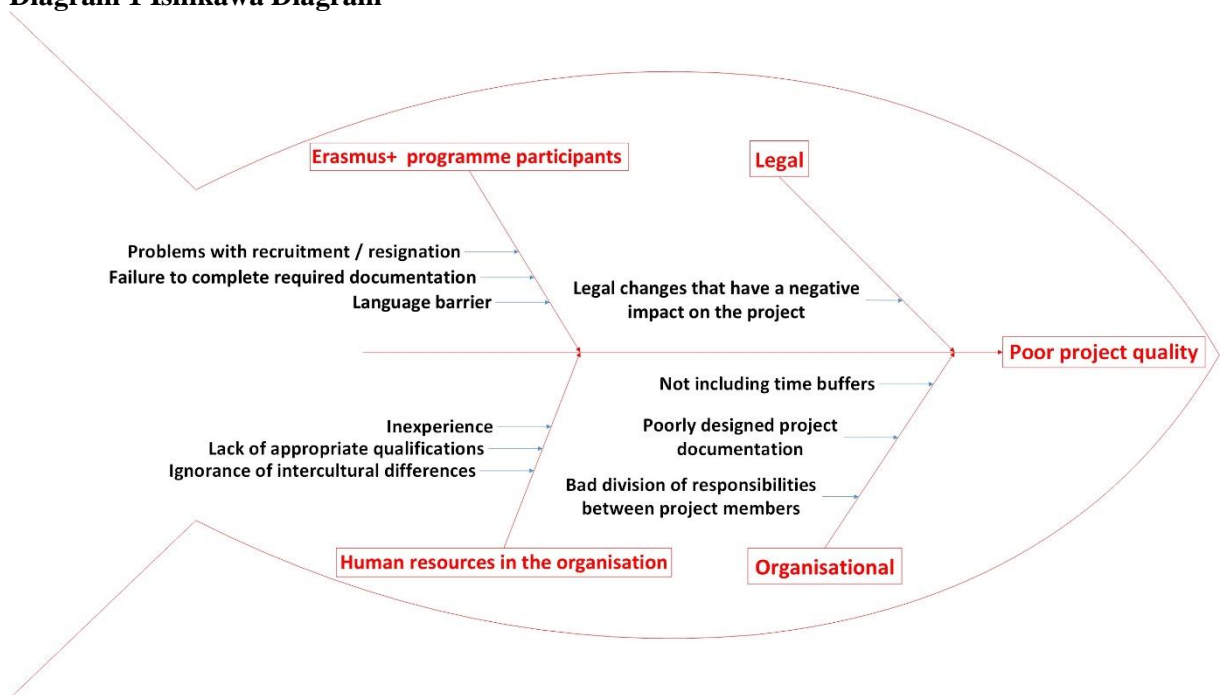
One of the most common tools for risk communication and risk management is the risk register (Table 3). Its task is to collect all information on: identified risks, presentation of existing control mechanisms, risk impact, probability of occurrence, significance, reaction and risk. It also often includes the person indicated as the risk owner and the person responsible for taking action.

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[11] See more: Project Management Institute: op. cit.

Scheme 2 Risk Register

Area of activity	AIM/ Task	Risk description	Risk owner	Existing control mechanisms	Risk Impact *	Probability of risk **	Irrelevance of risk***	Is the risk level accepted?	Type of risk response	Actions necessary to undertake	Person responsible for taking	Deadline for taking action
1.												
2.												
3.												
4.												

Appendix No. 1 to the Risk Management Policy at Poznań University of Economics and Business

Once the hazard has been identified, the next step is to undertake an analysis of the acceptability of the risk based on the degree of risk and the probability of its occurrence. A risk map (Table 4) is a tool for this service, which, after posting data from the risk register, indicates which risks are acceptable or not.

Scheme 3 Risk Map

Risk Level	Very high (4)				
	High (3)				
	Moderate (2)				
	Low (1)				
		Low (1)	Moderate (2)	High (3)	Very high (4)
		Probability of risk			

Source: Appendix No. 2 to the Risk Management Policy at Poznań University of Economics and Business

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The work was aimed at presenting the risk management capabilities of the beneficiary organisation of the Erasmus+ programme and the identification of risk factors in projects. To summarise the results of the study, it must be stated that there are many risk management options available to organisations at a low cost, and early identification of risks increase the probability of success achieved by the project. Due to the multifaceted nature of the Erasmus+ programme, risk management should definitely be included in project planning.

The analysis has shown that the Erasmus+ programme does not have sufficiently developed risk management topic in mobility learning projects. The absence of risk management publications in other projects may result in the beneficiaries of Erasmus+ not being sufficiently aware of the risks involved in their projects and how to prevent them. It is therefore important that organisations independently and / or in collaboration with other organisations develop a concept and techniques for project risk management.

The identified risks have shown that they are most often related to the human factor, whether within the project team or programme participants. The most common problems are the qualification and resignation of the participants, which creates difficulties for organisations in carrying out their activities in accordance with the timetable and the risk of not using the allocated funds and what is their return.

Among projects implemented jointly with foreign partners, there are communication problems resulting from linguistic barriers, cultural differences, different views or different experiences or lack thereof. Cooperation with Partner Countries increases the financial risk, as it is the organisation from the Programme Country that has and redistributes the received budget and is required to settle it with the National Agency. Another important aspect is the risk associated with ensuring the quality of the objectives of the projects and their appropriate documentation. Failure to meet this criterion may result in the need for partial or total reimbursement of the grant awarded.

The risks associated with the political situation or legal changes should not be underestimated, even though the organisation does not have an impact on this. It is important to create a map of the political situation in selected parts of the world and to monitor it. Thanks to this analysis it will be easier to select foreign partners while, at the same time, eliminating risks. For this purpose, it is most appropriate to appoint an expert group, which will make it possible to achieve the intended goals.

The most effective and least expensive financial risk identification and management techniques include those that collect information, such as: Brainstorming, SWOT

risk analysis or charting, the Ishikawa diagram, decision trees. As the advantages of these techniques can be exchanged; low cost (requires only time) can be carried out by any employee, regardless of his position, as well as versatile as they can be applied to both projects and organisations. It is particularly important for SWOT analysis that this method allows one to reflect on the strengths of the project / organisation and its opportunities. This also confirms the fact that risk is not only a threat, but also a possibility. Risks are definitely worth managing, since coping with adverse situations depends on the success of the project, and comprehensive risk minimisation is a common occurrence in project implementation today. Therefore, it is worth implementing experience, conclusions and recommendations within projects of the Erasmus+ programme.

DISCLAIMER

Any opinions, findings, and conclusion or recommendations expressed in this paper are those of the author and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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INTERNATIONAL WEEK – THE SOLUTION FOR STT- AND STA MOBILITIES? AN ANALYSIS OF THE FORMAT

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, more and more HEIs have introduced and adapted the format "International Week" to handle STT and STA mobilities within the ERASMUS resp. ERASMUS+ programme. To assess the format, the expectations, aims and effort related to it, we have conducted an online survey among Austrian pedagogical universities as well as selected European partner universities. The focus is on the balance between the content-related expectations and aims of such a format on the one hand, the organisational and administrative structures the HEIs have to work within on the other side. The results can serve as a framework for developing and enhancing the format "International Week", as well as support the decision-making process or serve as an argumentation aid for those who are planning to organize an "International Week" for the first time.

(1) STARTING POINT

In 2012, the first International Week for administrative and teaching staff was organised at PHT, 13 persons from 10 European countries came as participants to Innsbruck. Since then, the organisational framework and the content-related approach was adapted and developed further, providing also colleagues from other institutions with insights and experiences (Steiner & Schmid, 2013). In 2017, we welcomed 20 participants to our 5th International Week. It was the largest number of incoming mobilities for the International Week up to now, including new partner institutions from Southern Europe and Eastern Asia. A lot has changed and developed in these five years, so we decided to reflect on some basic questions – not just within our team but with our national and European colleagues too. We wanted to know why our colleagues started their first International Week. What were the

reasons to start with this format of STA and/or STT-mobilities? We also wanted to know more about the main goals, what did they (plan to) achieve with an International Week? Also we invited them to reflect on the structural, administrational framework within each institution that creates their distinctive solutions for tasks. The following sections explain the method of the survey and the sample (2) and give some basic information about the institutions involved (3). Which activities are carried out within an International Week, the different focuses and approaches (4) are illustrated briefly and cannot be explained without looking at the organizational and strategic reasons (5). In chapter 6 we will explain why the participants see their expectations fulfilled, although there is not a common view whether the format is sustainable or not. Our conclusion (8) points out that there is actually a lack of a top-down strategy, which allows at the same time to find individual, to the local requirements adjusted solutions for the question, how to implement and advance Internationalisation at home.

(2) SURVEY AND SAMPLE

We designed an online-questionnaire, consisting of four parts with 31 questions in total. The questionnaire, which was available in German and English, was sent to selected Austrian pedagogical universities/university colleges of Teacher Education and European partners (all with a focus on teacher education or working in this field).

The Austrian sub-sample consisted of eleven pedagogical universities resp. university colleges, who are organising or have been organising an International Week. During a networking meeting on April 20th 2017, were colleagues from the International Offices of almost all Austrian pedagogical universities were present, a group interview was held. Here it became obvious that just 4 out of 15 are not are organizing International Weeks. Three have not yet organized an International Week, one pedagogical university has stopped the format.

Legal Status	Total Number	Yes	No, not yet	No not any more
Public	9	6	2	1
Private	4	3	1	0
Private-Public	1	1	0	0

Table 1: Austrian Pedagogical Universities using the format "International Week"

Among our more than 50 European and international partner institutions we selected a number of 14 partners, who represented the main European regions as well as smaller and larger institutions. Here the turnout was surprisingly high with ten returned and valid questionnaires. The European partner institutions participating in

our survey came from Germany, Czech Republic, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain and Turkey, therefore representing all regions, which are relevant within our partner network.

All in all, our conclusion is based on 14 valid questionnaires and a transcript from a group interview with our Austrian colleagues. It is clear that we were not interested in a statistical representative set of answers, but in a qualitative collection and analyses. We offered many open questions, which allowed reflecting on the topic more detailed and invited to give examples. These answers were the most interesting for us and we have grouped them around a set of topics.

(3) BASIC DATA ON INSTITUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL WEEKS

Regarding size the European partners are between 5,400–60,000 students and 500-7,000 staff members (lecturers and administration). Compared to these numbers the Austrian pedagogical universities are rather small, the pedagogical university Vienna being one of the largest with apr. 3,000 students and 400 staff members.

The following numbers show the results from the Austrian and the European partners.

We also asked for the institutional level at which the International Offices are integrated in the structure of their institution. One can find the International Office organized as a service centres or as a part of the central administration resp. central services. More often the International Office reports directly to the rector or responsible vice-rector. In one example the International Office was developed further into a new Institute of Diversity Management and International Relations. (This very same example has the longest history of organizing an International Week, as they started the format in 2001and have reached their 16th International Week so far.)

To start with the things all International Weeks had in common: the working language is English, the average number of days with activities is 4,7. Also, when it comes to the average number of participants, a number close to 20 was mentioned most often, no matter if the university was a large or a small one regarding student and staff numbers. Ten of the returned answers stated that the interval for organizing an International Week is once per year. Quite a large variety of answers came on the questions of experience and a general topic. On the question "How often have you organized an International Week" we got answers between 16 times to 1 time, the most frequently given response was 3 or 4 times. This means, that the example of this format is around and known for many years already, but still institutions decided to implement and adapt the format to their needs with a high frequency between 2013 and 2014. Regarding the question if a general topic is used to frame the International

Week, 50% of the answers stated yes, they do use a general topic. A little less than 50% answered with no, while one partner answered: it depends.

The number of staff involved and total outreach – if possible to name exact numbers – is also significant information. Again, an interesting result was that the number of staff involved in planning, organizing and carrying out the activities for the receiving institution, is one to three persons, no matter how big or small the institution is. We conclude that relatively small teams within the International Offices plan and coordinate the International Weeks for the entire institution. Main activities to enhance internationalisation are still carried out by a core team within the International Offices.

On the other side, the number of students and staff members involved or benefitting from the activities varies a lot. Due to the different approaches and formats, the number of students involved was stated on a range between five [sic] to 200, of lecturers and university staff between five to 80.

Here we also asked whether or not support from the municipality or other local institutions was/is available. Only two partners mentioned some kind of involvement or support, e.g. contributions to or hosting a welcome event, free entrance fees or public transportation. This confirms our own experience that trying to involve public or private institutions (such as companies or local tourism associations) is difficult and requires a lot of early planning. ERASMUS+ mobilities and activities within the International Week are not yet regarded as a chance to promote a location or to convey values such as internationalism or interculturality. The activities remain within the context of the educational setting of the institutions and are not taken into effect by the surrounding municipality and tourism industry.

(4) A HIGH VARIETY OF APPROACHES

When comparing the different approaches to structure an International Week, we discovered a high variety within the answers given. It takes a range from thematic based weeks involving the whole university to focussing only on a few specific partnerships and a precisely defined output (e.g. publications). One example was even more narrowed down, focusing only on staff and lecturers, which resulted in a "tandem-model" where two teachers were teamed up and developed lectures together over a period of at least a study year.

This variety of approaches is due to the very different objectives pursued by organising an International Week. On the question, what the International Week is mainly used for, the top answers were:

- Intensifying and strengthening existing partnerships
- Internationalisation at home (IaH)
- Networking with other HEI's
- Transfer of knowledge on administrational level
- Establishing new partnerships

Other aspects mentioned were the dissemination of project results, preparing mobilities (students, staff mobility for teaching or training), providing training units for lecturers and staff members of the own institution as well as pooling administrational and financial resources.

(5) REASONS FOR ORGANIZING AN INTERNATIONAL WEEK

When we set up the questionnaire, we assumed that the organisational and strategic reasons to adopt this format of STA/STT mobilites would be the most significant one. Indeed, the more efficient use of resources (especially time) was mentioned as a very strong point.

As all our interview partners are working within the field of teacher education, visits to practice schools are an essential part of partner visits, but of course schools will object to ongoing interruptions during the school year. On the other hand, when a whole week is organized and communicated early enough, schools are more willing and even happy to contribute. They can use this specific week to reach out to a professional audience and integrate this event within the lessons for their pupils.

But also regarding the receiving institution, the motivation to participate within a certain week with larger events is higher. The answers given confirmed that it is easier to lower the bar, to encourage colleagues and involve different levels in the organization and activities with an International Week.

> „We used to have a lot of inquiries for staff training visits, which were almost always turned down (...) by offering a week a year, inviting several departments to participate - we could offer a possibility for both visitors but also for the staff to be part of a larger event (...)"

When asking for strategic reasons, aims and expectations towards the International Week, this argument also played an important role. The most frequently mentioned

aims were to enhance IaH[12], to offer training for lecturers and staff members, creating and raising awareness within one's own institution. Strategic aims focussing on the work areas of International Offices/Centres were:

- Establishing new partnerships
- Preparing STT/STA
- Intensifying and strengthening existing partnerships
- Transfer of knowledge

When asked whether or not they faced obstacles to implement an International Week, the question was answered with "yes" two times. One partner mentioned a sceptic top-down perspective: the responsible head of department regarded individual visits as more intense and sustainable, but after the first International Week he was convinced by the positive aspects of this format. Another partner pointed out that he faced blockades at the base. He faced enormous difficulties to motivate other faculties' – respectively faculty coordinators – to promote the International Week to the faculties ERASMUS+ partners.

(6) EXPECTATIONS FULFILLED?

On this question, the answers have been entirely positive, not a single questionnaire was returned with another answer than "yes". It was pointed out:

- Internationalisation became more and more visible, the significance rose steadily
- Raising commitment within the own institution
- Raising number of registrations
- New ERASMUS+ Agreements
- New curricula were developed
- Very positive evaluations and feedback by participants

The following quote from one of the answers focuses on the very starting point for successful interactions.

> „(…) earlier our staff was frightened or negative to meet and speak to
> international colleagues. After they have found out that it is very nice and

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[12] "Internationalisation at Home is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students, within domestic learning environments." (Beelen & Jones 2017, 69)

> *that their English does not have to be perfect, they were able to find it interesting to see similarities or differences in ways of working."*

This illustrates the very common misconception that in tertiary education the language barrier is not relevant. Even in educational contexts, those – real or imagined – inadequacies prevented staff members to participate and fully appreciate the benefits of such mobilities resp. IaH. The opportunity of face-to-face-communication and exchange created the necessary setting and atmosphere to correct these assumptions and make the first steps towards IaH possible.

(7) SUSTAINABILITY

Following this absolutely positive resume we were quite surprised that the question "Do you regard the format as a sustainable one?" was answered only to 55% with "yes", 45% stated "no". In parts, this can be explained with some of the weak-points of the format, which the respondents analysed.

An International Week requires long-term preparation regarding content and administration as well as support and cooperation on many levels, from rectorate to faculty, administration and lecturers. The format is time consuming and the realization of the actual events during the International Week is very intense for the whole team. As many members of our partner universities are employed on contracts which include teaching, planning and administrative tasks at the same time, such events have effects on all other responsibilities such as teaching, research and strategic/administrational obligations.

Also regarding the quality of the interaction during the International Week several answers pointed out the lack of time for bilateral talks. Furthermore not all participants are familiar with IaH-concepts, meaning there have to be offers and activities to bring all participants to a certain common denominator. Setting clear goals and selecting participants is necessary, although this might limit other positive aspects of such events. Nevertheless, the answers given suggest that the format is under constant development as the institutions are looking for solutions and new ideas.

> *"the effort of planning and realizing an International Week is considerable. Maybe other formats (e.g. co-operation with other institutions of higher education in the region to set up International Weeks) could be considered"*

But still the strong points of the format outweigh the weak points. Pooling, intensifying the exchange and networking within one week, presenting the full profile of the institution to partners, enhancing the overall visibility of the home

institution, combined with a great flexibility regarding target group, methods and goals – the Internation Weeks remain a central tool for Iah.

(8) CONCLUSION

In the past years many HEIs started to implement International Weeks as part of their internationalisation strategy (cf. Beelen 2007; Kosunen, Peltola, & Tauriainen, 2015). The format "International Week" definitely meets existing requirements and makes it easier for outgoing teaching and/or staff mobilities to find a partner university offering an appropriate programme and welcoming teachers/staff members. Platforms such as http://staffmobility.eu/staff-week-search support universities and/or staff members to search for interesting options.

As our survey shows, International Weeks cannot fulfill all expectations, but the format can be a good, if not central tool to implement and support IaH. Much depends on the design of the International weeks. While some HEIs organise weeks with a special focus on staff members working in different fields, others concentrate on lecturers within ERASMUS+ STA. Other HEIs see their week even as a conference for International Educators.

The not overall satisfaction of the persons involved in planning and organising International Weeks shows that even if the format is now quite established, further development - professional, administrative and substantively - is necessary. Although most of the International Offices are located at the higher levels of institutional structures, the benefit of these activities is not played to its full potential. The latest Eurydice report, Modernisation of Higher Education in Europe: Academic Staff – 2017, points at which role international activities and mobilities could play as part of personnel development within an institution:

> *From the perspective of academic staff, opportunities for international activities and mobility could be viewed as an essential part of the terms and conditions of academic employment and as an important means for professional development. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017)*

The same report also states the lack of a top-down strategy when it comes to internationalisation on the national level.

> *"[...] the majority of European higher education systems have defined strategic objectives related to the internationalisation of higher education. However while academic staff have a major responsibility to take forward and implement such objectives, they tend to be mentioned explicitly only in relation to mobility. Even when this is the case, centrally set targets for*

staff mobility rarely exist." (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017)

This could explain in parts, why so many participants of the survey questioned the sustainability of the format International Week, although regarding it successful to fulfil very specific local requirements. While sometimes institutions seem to struggle on their own with the need to find a framework for internationalisation activities, the missing top-down-strategy advanced the great variety in shaping the format International Week. Comparing, discussing and analysing the work for these events on the one hand, the reasons and aims on the other hand, could offer a new source for a realistic assessment of the format "International Week".

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GICASES KNOWLEDGE ALLIANCE:
AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO GI TEACHING AND LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

giCASES is a Knowledge Alliance project under the Erasmus+ programme of the European Commission. The project aims to enable and strengthen innovation in GI education and industry and to facilitate the collaborative creation, management and sharing of knowledge. These objectives are addressed by developing new, innovative and multidisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning within the Geographic Information (GI) sector, and by facilitating the exchange, flow and co-creation of this knowledge.

ABOUT GICASES

The giCASES project started on January 1st 2016 and it has a duration of 3 years. The Consortium is formed by 14 Partners (9 non-academic) from 7 European countries.

KEYWORDS

In the following a set of relevant terms are explained in detail in order to clearly define their meaning in the specific context of giCASES.

Knowledge: is defined as the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. It represents the body of facts, principles, theories and practices related to a field of work or study.

Skills: indicate the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

Competence: means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

Co-creation of knowledge: the process through which two or more organizations and/or actors interact with each other in a collaborative fashion to generate learning content. By nature, co-creation of knowledge is a cooperative and multidirectional process, where all the subjects involved intervene.

Case study: it consists of a real-world problem, which tackle specific topics and issues and has well-defined scopes, learning outcomes, results, time frames (beginning and end dates), actors and corresponding roles, and is addressed in a learning environment.

Use case: refers to a high-level description of the collaborative processes and the related actors and their mutual interactions. Therefore, use cases represent the abstraction required to model the processes of co-creation of knowledge.

(Case based) collaborative learning: the educational approach adopted within the giCASES project, where knowledge is cooperatively produced by all the actors involved in the specific case studies planned.

(Case based) learning/training material: the whole of materials produced and/or used to co-create knowledge. These materials may be different depending on each specific case study, and they can include written/textual manuals, tutorials, guidelines and reports; slide presentations; video and audio recordings; software code, apps and other technical components.

(Case based) learning/training tools: the solutions and technical tools adopted to store, visualize, reproduce, present or aid the development and exchange of learning/training material as well as the results of the learning process.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the giCASES project are to improve the quality and relevance of GI courses provided by the University members of the consortium, to facilitate the growth of new knowledge-sharing processes and tools between enterprises and universities and to improve the management of knowledge by the

partners. The overall approach to address these objectives is to develop new learning material and processes based on case based learning. In the giCASES approach, enterprises and academia collaborate both when creating learning material based on real cases and during the courses (through a collaborative platform). The new learning material and collaborative teaching will be tested in university settings. Questions related to processes for creation of knowledge and knowledge repositories will be placed at a strategic level, also within the enterprises.

The project results will be provided under open licenses. In order to optimize the spread and usage of the project results, dissemination actions will specifically address external universities adhering to the open learning paradigm.

CASE STUDIES

To test and validate the proposed case-based learning approach, 6 case studies (CS) were defined which tackle specific real-world problems and have well-defined scopes, learning outcomes, results, time frames, actors and corresponding roles.

They are:

1. Use of indoor GIS in health care

   The objective of this Case Study is to introduce a group of 4-5 students to the topic of GIS-based indoor LBS and engage them in the development of a real application in a context of interaction between a university (POLIMI) and a SME company (TRILOGIS). The development of the Case Study will be based on a variety of learning methods, which will encompass traditional theoretical lectures as well as practical hands-on tutorials and teamwork sessions.

2. Environmental analysis using cloud service systems

   The Case Study wants to address the use of new web technologies and GIS analysis to perform an integrated multi-criteria assessment for the evaluation of potential hazard to SCI areas caused by the exposure to agrochemicals and pesticide. For those analyses the next generation of technique has to more extensively use web tools and geo-processing. In fact, most data are now available via the web thought web services (OGC WxS or ArcGIS Server) and Linked Open Data protocols.

3. Location Enablement of e-Government

   The Case Study aims the set-up of a case-based and collaborative learning environment in the private company in the context of an existing internship course offered by KU Leuven. Students will apply their

already acquired knowledge and skills on GIS, SDI and ICT to work in a mixed team with staff from the company to design, develop and/or test location enabled applications. By working together with experienced staff the student will learn new skills or apply what they have learned in a real-world context.

4. Integrated management of the underground

The Case Study has two scopes: the asset management of utility networks and the sharing of utility network data. Infrastructure asset management is the combination of management, financial, economic, engineering and other practices applied to physical assets with the objective of providing the required level of service in the most cost-effective manner. Data sharing refers to the technologies, procedures, standards and regulations to be applied when sharing data with external parties.

5. Harmonizing data flows in energy saving EU policies

The objective of this Case Study is to engage a group of 4-5 students in the development of an application focused on one or more specific aspects of a data flow in support of one of the energy policies. The implementation will rely on the concepts, principles and technicalities of the EU INSPIRE Directive and will be based on a preliminary analysis of the current EU policies on energy efficiency.

6. GIS Applications in Forestry

The scope of this Case Study, is, by creating a well-structured graduate / postgraduate course, to introduce the GIS tools that can be used in forest management, and also to provide novel data processing, spatial and multi-objective methods. The general aim is to provide the students with a firm theoretical foundation and understanding of forest management, including the social and environmental parameters and the ability to apply theory in practice, through the lab sessions.

In the six case studies open data (over all OpenStreetMap), OGC standards and services (such as QGIS, GRASS GIS, GeoServer, PostGIS, OpenLayers, and Leaflet) will be used. This shows how open source solutions are widely used not just as GI teaching tools at the universities, but also as a means to develop powerful business products at the companies.

MODELLING THE LEARNING PROCESS

All case studies are different from each other, but the processes they use to co-create knowledge may have many characteristics in common.

The common characteristics of the collaborative processes used in the various cases studies to co-create knowledge have been modelled through a high-level description (abstraction), defined as patterns of co-creation or "use cases", i.e. the abstraction of a context-specific process of collaboration which can be then realized within one or multiple case studies. The process patterns of case based learning and co-creation of knowledge have been classified according to their degree of collaboration and their type of output.

4 collaboration patterns have been identified and described using BPMN (Business Process Model and Notation) diagrams:

1. Shared development of learning material

2. Collaborative development of learning material

3. Shared provision of training

4. Internships
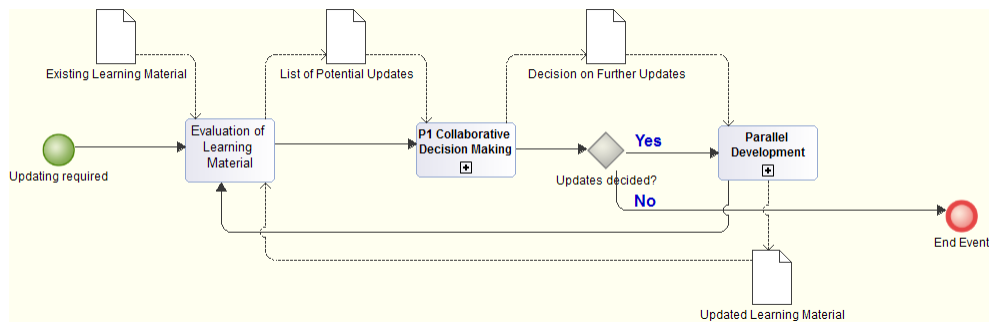
BPMN diagrams for 1 - Shared Development of Learning Material
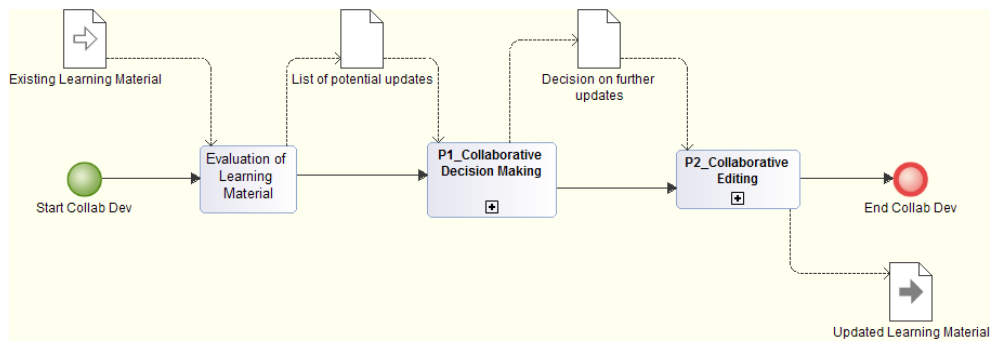
BPMN diagrams for 2 - Collaborative Development of Learning Material
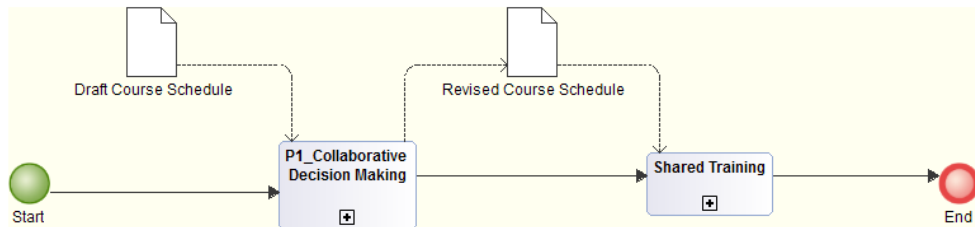
BPMN diagrams for 3 - Shared Provision of Training
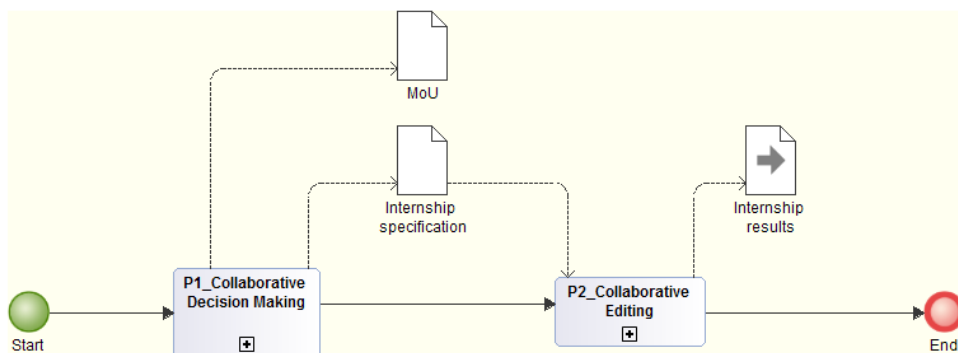
BPMN diagrams for 4 - Internship

For each of the patterns, guidelines, templates and draft agreements to be used when developing and providing case based learning have been defined.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the learning offer should respond to market needs timely, it is no longer possible to develop curricula or, in general, learning paths, either in formal or informal settings, based on identified needs, since those needs will have changed in the same timespan needed by HEIs to design and put in place the curricula. That is why the involvement of businesses in instructional design must become the standard way to match labour market needs, and the case-based approach proposed by giCASES, together with the collaborative learning paradigm to foster co-creation of knowledge, are considered as the elective tools to achieve such an ambitious scope.

This collaboration model, when widely adopted, will also address the acquisition of transversal and soft skills, which are nowadays recognised as labour market-relevant skills to boost employability and competitiveness of the workforce, in line with the communication by the European Commission "A new skills agenda for Europe" (European Commission, 2016). Thanks to the open access policy adopted by giCASES and the replicability of the developed methodology, other stakeholders are expected to join the Alliance and to adopt its case-based approach as a university-business cooperation model, generating a direct or indirect effect on actors, structures, sectors or systems at the EU level.

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HOW CAN MOBILITY DRAIN UNIVERSITY CAREER OFFICES

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ABSTRACT

Mobility, as the key focus of the Erasmus+ Program, is successfully sponsored through university international offices. Placement abroad opportunities guarantee future Erasmus+ success stories. Yet, such an emphasis is not obvious in the administrative organization of placement at home. The introduction of EU funded career offices in Greece during the last two decades was an aspiring concept that now decays due to financial cuts and minimum support. Using the case study of Panteion University career office facility as opposed to the university's international office equivalent, I will argue that mobility as a priority concept of Erasmus+ Program can, sometimes, overshadow the Program's own targets to tackle youth unemployment and inspire university and business cooperation.

The elevation of mobility to the No 1 Key Strategy of Erasmus+ Programme (2014-2020) is often seen as an uncontroversial initiative, with main scope to establish Higher Education (HE) cooperation and enable the process of Europeanization of national educational systems. Mobility is appreciated as the means to engage individuals and universities towards the building of a European consciousness and of course the formation of an internationally competitive environment and a common labor market (Papatsiba, 2006). There is no doubt that mobility as an initiative, useful to society and economy, is recognized as the most visible and promising opportunity offered by the European Union (EU), especially, in a period of financial crisis and precarity.

This presentation intends to reflect upon the university Erasmus+ offices (or else International offices or Departments of International Relations and EU) which organize and deliver the promotion of mobility in different institutional, national and socio-economic contexts, yet with clear guidance from the European Commission's National Agencies (IKY) and along the objectives set by the Erasmus+ Programme.

I will, therefore, emphasize on the university's administrative environment and everyday life and operation, in order to draw attention to the implementation processes of the Programme and not its conception. Through preliminary ethnographic research and according to a small sample of the discourse of administrative staff as well as that derived from university websites, I will argue that mobility not only runs over the main scope of the Erasmus+ Programme, but can also perform the Programme's initiatives in different, and sometimes contradictory, ways. In order to do that, I will try to describe the disparities and discrepancies that occur between the establishment of the Erasmus+ offices and the decaying of the university Career Offices and the comparison in terms of their operation and efficiency along with the levels of extroversion or isolation of their profile.

In Greece, the Erasmus+ offices were introduced to universities in order to deal with the organization and management of mobility and as Departments of International Relations and EU, they take part in the core universities administration chart. During the last two decades, and in compliance with the predecessor of Erasmus+, the LifeLong Learning Programme (LLP) (2007-2013) the Greek Ministry of Education through the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF),(ΕΣΠΑ) funding also approved the operation of Career offices, another EU initiative that would enable and facilitate the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by promoting a new institutional mentality based on efficiency, performativity and investment to university – business cooperation and proceeded to a national horizontal action for their compliance and cooperation. Along the guidelines of LLP, the university Career office, along with the Practical Training office (placement) and the Unit for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, formed the Bureau for Employment and Career (ΔΑΣΤΑ, Δομή Απασχόλησης και Σταδιοδρομίας) and apart from career counseling, their responsibility would be to gather and diffuse information on job opportunities, studentships, post-graduate programmes, EU educational programmes and lifelong learning opportunities. They would also have to conduct research on labor market tendencies and find ways to built university cooperation with private sector employers. Their work would be better communicated through websites with helpful links to students and university alumni.

Although, mobility seems to be a priority that distinguishes the programme between the Career office and the Erasmus+ office, is also seen as "a means of producing certain intellectual affects in individuals at the same time it introduces institutional change" (Papatsiba, 2006) and therefore, apart from their distinct profile, the two offices should be considered and conceptualized as initiatives with the same long-term objectives, the way they are declared by the Erasmus+ Programme, to make universities better through a shared vision, common practice and cooperation, tackle youth unemployment and inspire university and business cooperation, while trying to overcome massive cuts on national education funding.

The reality depicted in Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, which I will use as a case study, is disappointing in the sense that the quality of services provided by the two offices seems to be antagonistic and unequally sponsored.

Being a prospective Phd Erasmus student myself, I recently visited the Erasmus+ office to ask more information about the options of host universities I could apply for. The office is based on the ground floor of new-built university premises, and at the moment is run by 5 employees under fixed-term contracts. For the Welcome Days of incoming Erasmus Students as well as the Information Days for the outgoing ones along with other events it organizes, the main Reception Hall is booked and the vice-rector is present. The office website is up to date and students are encouraged to use its social media profiles for quicker responses and clarifications.

In comparison to the above, the Career office, which used to be adjacent to the Erasmus+ office, has now been moved to the old 5 m² caretaker's outpost opposite the lifts and staircase that lead to the building's other floors. The office employee, told me that she used to work with another 4 people, who have now been transferred to others administrative sectors or were dismissed when the NSRF funding was not renewed in 2015. She told me that she also was transferred to the anthropology department's secretary but took over her duties as a career counselor when her appeal was accepted. She was obviously very disappointed and told me she felt neglected although she indented to do all it took for the Career office to survive.

When I asked her to tell me her everyday responsibilities she told me she provides personal career counseling and organize occasional seminars on professional skills but most of the time she is informally asked to assist with the Public Relations office workload and be in charge of the university's museum open hours. She needs to clean her office space and for the time being, her formal position does not take part in the central administrative chart and there is no senior manager responsible for her duties. One could easily conclude that the Career office webpage is out of date and that overall, as she even admitted "the Career office does not exist".

Although the comparison of her everyday life is dramatically different to that of her fellow employees in the Erasmus+ office, what is more striking, is the impression she has of them: she thinks that all attention, respect as well as funding is driven towards the work done "next door" and that university staff, academic personnel and even the Rector have been very supportive and cooperative with the mobility programmes that they deal with. She even asked me if I thought she could have any chances to take advantage of any Erasmus+ Programme funding in order to support the Career office future and when I asked her why she did not refer to the office "next door" she told me that they didn't show her or her job description any respect.

The same negative impression is also shared by the employer who's left the only responsible for the Practical Training home programmes. He has also been moved to another office which, as he told me will soon be taken over from the Erasmus+ office. He is on a fixed term contract as well, yet he is afraid that it won't be renewed. He told me that, until now, placement is a prerequisite for some departments (psychology) and therefore he is still necessary, yet he believes that the EC tendency is to support placement abroad with studentships under the Erasmus+ Programme and omit paid @ home placement. He thinks that the office "next door" receives loads of funding and that "they keep everyone happy (students, academics and staff) with the travelling" while at the same time the Practical Training Programme was "closed" for the last 2 years and has just received funding to run again, although it's the 1/3 of what it used to be. He told me he didn't trust the European Union policy for education since "it doesn't leave anything back to the university" and that the Erasmus+ office staff should not be very optimistic as well because "with no university there is no Erasmus".

From the above, one should not be tempted to conclude on a supposedly bad-tempered and arrogant Erasmus+ office staff attitude. It is evident that the distinction between mobility and non-mobility programmes in Panteion, and the Erasmus+ Programme priorities and intentions are performed in a negative and misleading way. What seems necessary is to reflect upon the degradation of university infrastructure and its inability to follow up the progress already been made concerning the process for constructing an EHEA. At the same time when the shift of European HE Programmes towards the labor market and an international competitive environment is recognized to be crucial, some planning and tools that have already been designed to support them, like the Career office initiative, are left unused or interrupted due to inconsistent funding and re-evaluated priorities. The criticism that is elaborated upon the EU educational strategy as well as the national governments hesitation to fully comply with it could spread even more in case universities are used as experimental grounds of controversial and selective support. Yet it is true that the main focus of Programmes likes Education and Training 2020 (ET2020), is not to reform "structures and procedures but rather relationships and subjectivities" and introduce the ethics of competition and performance. Universities are then called on to restructure in order to comply and foster a coherent, compatible and competitive EHEA (Gouvias, 2011).

Reclaiming the survival of the Career offices and their scope to support youth employment and entrepreneurship, especially in times of financial crisis and precarity, is heading towards the road that Erasmus+ is already paving. Mobility was not devised to alienate from national HE policies and systems but to promote the making of a competitive "Europe of knowledge".
Therefore, mobility should never be perceived or counted as an objective on its own but as the means to achieve a shared vision in HE.

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PARTICULARITIES OF THE INTERNATIONALIZATION PROCESS IN THE TECHNICAL MILITARY HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The most important universities have as objectives the increasing of the internationalization of higher education and the development of student, teaching staff and researchers' mobility, as well as the international compatibility of bachelor, master and PhD study programs. Crossing national borders by students and teachers and their presence on the world market represent an important step in achieving European quality standards. Although the functioning of the technical military higher education is subject to further limitations imposed by the rigors of the military system, its connection to the quality requirements of the European system is a necessity as well as a reality. Therefore, the implementation of the internationalization concept is a priority target in technical military higher education institutions. Military higher education acquires greater international dimension as a larger number of students, teaching staff and specialists get involved in mobility and international projects. International cooperation in military higher education is an important area that contributes to improving the quality of teaching, learning and research processes, being beneficial for the generation of new skills and knowledge. While for the students of civil universities Erasmus mobility represents an opportunity to increase their employability chances, for military students Erasmus mobility represents the chance to gain international experience which, along with the new skills and knowledge acquired, provide them a better adaptation to fit into a new, international and multicultural environment.

1.   INTERNATIONALIZATION CONCEPT

The concept of internationalization is used nowadays in the many higher education institution and represents *international activities* such as academic mobility for students and teachers, networks, partnerships and projects, academic programmes and research activities, *delivery of education* to other countries using a variety of face-to-face and distance techniques, *inclusion of an international, intercultural and/or global dimension* into the curriculum and teaching learning process and *means to improve national or international rankings of the institution*. The internationalization is often seen as a *process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education* [1]. The internationalization of higher education is an ongoing effort integrated in all the process of higher education. Internationalization is a process of embedding the international and intercultural dimension into the educational policies and into the educational programmes, in order to ensure sustainability and centrality to the mission and values of the institution. *International* is used in the sense of relationships between and among nations, cultures or countries. *Intercultural* is used to address aspects of cultural diversity that exist within countries, communities, institutions and classrooms. *Global* is included to provide the sense of worldwide scope. *Purpose* refers to the overall role that higher education has for a country, or, more specifically, the mission of an institution. *Function* refers to the primary elements or tasks that characterize a national higher education system and also an individual institution. Usually these include teaching/learning, research and service to the society. *Delivery* refers to the offering of education courses and programmes either domestically or in other countries [1].

There are many approaches of internationalization: *activities* (study abroad, international academic programmes, international students, institutional networks, international research projects, interational campuses), *outcomes* (international student competencies, increased profile and more international agreements, international partners and projects), *motivation* (academic standards, income generation, cultural diversity and student and/or staff development), *internationalisation abroad* (cross-border delivery of education to other countries through a variety of delivery modes) and *internationalisation at home* (creation of a culture or climate on campus that promotes and supports international/intercultural understanding and focuses on campus-based or 'at home' activities).

2.   TECHNICAL MILITARY HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

At European level, is visible the phenomenon of higher education internationalization, most of the important universities aiming at increasing mobility of their students, professors and researchers and defining compatible study programs for bachelor, master and PhD. In this context, crossing national borders by universities and reporting to the world market of education is an important step in achieving European quality standards.
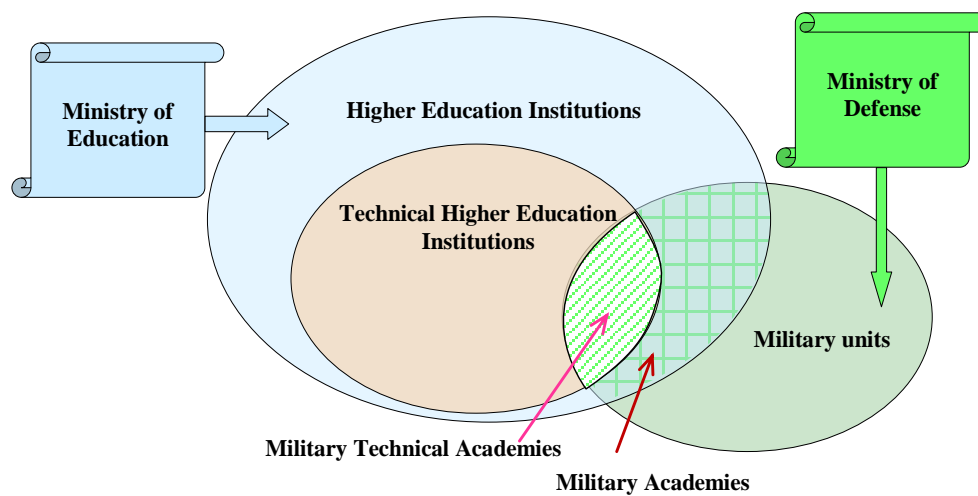
Fig. 1 Higher Education Institutions

In fig. 1 is represented the place of military technical higher education institutions among the all higher education institutions. Military technical higher education is linked to the qualitative requirements of national and European education, implementing the concept of internationalization is a priority goal in all higher education institutions in Romania, including in military technical higher education. It acquires a greater international dimension, as an increasing number of students, professors and researchers are involved in mobility and international projects. International cooperation in military technical higher education is an important area that contributes in improving the quality of teaching, learning and research and is beneficial for generating new knowledge and skills.

Military Technical Academy of Bucharest (MTA) represents the military technical higher education of Romania, being a polytechnic education institution that forms and provides professional development of logistics

officers, engineers, specialist officers and civilian personnel selected for the needs of the defence, public order and national security structures or for beneficiaries in the country and abroad. MTA conducts higher education study programs organized in undergraduate, master and doctoral studies in its accredited fields and specializations, and other forms of training, perfecting and specialization.

Regarding international relations, MTA conducts mobility of students, by sending its own students to foreign military and civilian universities and by receiving foreign students. Mobility of students target undergraduate, master and PhD exchange programs studies, the development of bachelor, master and PhD projects and theses, the development of strong collaborations and, specific for military institutions, training sessions including military activities. Professors and research personnel conduct research and teaching activities in foreign military and civilian partner universities.

The most important component of international relations of MTA is the Erasmus+ program, developed since the years 2014 (since 2000 Erasmus-Socrates and since 2007 Erasmus-LLP). International mobilities carried out under the Erasmus program are: *student mobilities for study*: internships for participation in courses for an academic year, a semester or a fraction of a semester or internships for preparing diploma or dissertation projects. Minimum duration of mobility study was three months and the maximum duration was twelve months. The period of full mobility is recognized by the home university through credit points gained during the internship, points of credit with the same significance for the all the institutions implied in the exchange; *student mobilities for traineeship*: internships of at least two or three months and maximum twelve months conducted in universities or research institutions abroad; *staff teaching mobilities*: relocation of professors in higher education institutions with Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education; *staff training mobilities*: temporary relocation of professors or non-academic personnel in higher education institutions or partner institutions, for professional and personal development.

Generally, students are highly motivated to participate in Erasmus mobilities because they have the chance to develop learning and cultural activities abroad and their experience will be included in their resume after graduation and will increase their chances to get a good job. On the other hand, military students are not looking for a job. Therefore, to choose to participate in Erasmus mobility for military students is different in relation to civilian

student motivation. The main motivation of military students is the opportunity to develop professional and personal competences based on international experience.

In MTA are prepared students for bachelor, master and doctoral studies in the following fields: Computer and Information Technology, Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering, Automotive Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, Civil Engineering and Armament, Missiles and Ammunition Engineering. Professional competences ensured by full or partial completion of the three study cycles in MTA were commonly agreed with the main employers of graduates in order to meet their needs.

In general, Erasmus mobilities of students were conducted in prestigious universities abroad to develop their bachelor or dissertation final project. Chosen subjects were consistent with the student's professional competence achieved during the study program and with their final projects. Host institutions for mobilities were both military and civilian universities, and sometimes research civilian institutions with technical concerns. In Europe there are very few military technical universities similar with MTA. Among them, the MTA has collaboration agreements with: ENSTA Brest, ENSTA Paris, Royale Military Academy Bruxelles, ISAE Toulouse and Military University of Technology in Warsaw. MTA also collaborates with other military universities: Military Academy of Saint Cyr Coetquidan, „Vasil Levski" National Military University Veliko Tarnovo and Military Academy of Land Forces from Wroclaw.

Having regard the small number of military technical educational institutions existing at European level since the learning process is organized according to their needs and its own specific national defence systems, it is difficult for students to find an MTA perfect mobility equivalent to the content of MTA curricula. But this is not necessarily a disadvantage, but rather an advantage in terms of diversity of international internship opportunities.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Although the majority of bachelor, master or PhD projects could be developed in MTA, it appears that by conducting international mobility, the student will improve considerably his knowledge and professional skills by having the chance to observe, during his internship, a new approach to the project content. In the final year of the study cycle each student has the responsibility

to develop a final project within which to apply the skills and knowledge gained over years of study spent in ATM. International mobility is a first test for students to see if the knowledge and skills gained while studying in MTA are effective. It was found that over 95% of MTA students fared in good condition and proved very good competences and knowledge during international internships; professors responsible for their evaluation constantly appreciated their work with high and very high grades. International recognition strengthens the students' confidence level and professional skills and validates high MTA education quality and competitiveness. MTA has the necessary number of specialized technical laboratories, but is limited in terms of endowment with specialized modern equipment and devices for civilian and military applications. Through internships abroad, students have the opportunity to work with similar or more modern software programs, equipment and devices which sometimes are not found in MTA laboratories. This is a great advantage for MTA students, because during Erasmus stages they gain access to a large number of modern laboratory equipment useful in their field of study. At the same time the student will have the chance to learn the construction and mode of operation of new or similar equipment, which is a challenge. This is an advantage for students who carry out activities abroad. Basically, by means of Erasmus mobility, students will have a very large number of specialized technical equipment and laboratories to perform their projects, improving their knowledge and skills gained in MTA. Another aspect that should not be overlooked is the fact that during mobility, the student accumulates knowledge and skills complementary to those ensured by the educational program of MTA, which leads to an increase of the professional level of the student.

The strategy of internationalization of military higher education in MTA includes the promotion of an international culture through: promoting cooperation with prestigious civilian and military institutions of higher education abroad, including both the research sector and that of businesses, as part of efforts to build a fully functioning knowledge triangle (education - research - innovation); encouraging and supporting outgoing and incoming mobility of students, professors and researchers; perfecting the competencies of students, professors, researchers and of other types of personnel needed to work in an open international environment; ensuring the supply of high quality curricula and teaching methods applied taking into consideration the international dimension; create an institutional environment that encourages the participation of students, professors and researchers in international

programs and international research projects; implementing the concept of internationalization at home: this involves the integration of the international dimension in everything that means life and academic work.

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HOW WE MANAGE TO RESCUE ERASMUS EXCHANGE STUDENTS FROM ISOLATION?

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ABSTRACT

Integrating Erasmus exchange students to university life can be regarded as a difficult task for an international office staff because the students are studying in a host university generally only for one semester that can be considered as a very short time period for integration. In addition to this, having different cultural environment makes these students' integration even a more challenging task for the international offices. In Turkey, we have such a dichotomy that Turkey attracts Erasmus exchange students generally with its interesting culture. But at the same time, the variety of culture in Turkey brings about an adaptation problem for them to university life and these students remain isolated as a small group that have only limited interaction with Turkish students.

Integrating Erasmus exchange students to university life can be regarded as a difficult task for an international office staff because the students are studying in a host university generally only for one semester that can be considered as a very short time period for integration. In addition to this, having different cultural environment makes these students' integration even a more challenging task for the international offices. In Turkey, we have such a dichotomy that Turkey attracts Erasmus exchange students generally with its interesting culture. But at the same time, the variety of culture in Turkey brings about an adaptation problem for them to university life and these students remain isolated as a small group that have only limited interaction with Turkish students.

An experienced international office staff can manage to observe this fact over years but we also proved that fact by a research project namely, "*City of Ankara is Getting Rich with Foreign Students*" conducted in 2012. In that project, international students were the target group who were studying in various universities at Ankara. There were 600 international students including Erasmus exchange students participated to the survey. It was aimed to identify international students' perceptions, requirements and problems relating to Ankara and their educational life at universities of Ankara. According to the survey, one of the most important reasons for exchange students to study in Turkey is to discover Turkish culture. They stated that Turkey is not well known in Europe and people have some general information on holiday destinations. However, Erasmus exchange students also declare that they would like to know the Turkish culture in depth. Erasmus students consider that Turkey is not an easily accessible country when it is compared with European countries. From their perspective, as an Erasmus programme country, studying in Turkey is a good opportunity for them. In addition to its culture, they think that Turkey is perceived as an 'affordable' country and lots of features to see in it. Incoming Erasmus students also express their feeling that the real life in Turkey is exciting for them in contrast to their countries' 'calm' conditions.

As it is commonly accepted that for most of the people who visit a foreign country, they have a limited interaction with the host country's citizens in the early stages of adaptation process and these people can hardly communicate with local people without knowing the local language in particular. It is also the case for Erasmus students who are coming to Turkey.

Having language competency is the most important factor to get accustomed to social life therefore, learning Turkish is essential for Erasmus students to get in touch with Turkish culture. For that reason, although their study period is short, in order to become familiar with Turkish culture, some exchange students have tendency to learn Turkish language by attending to language centres but in that case, they have only limited time period remains for university social life. Besides, they can only participate in courses in English that are organised for Erasmus students so they have almost no interaction with Turkish students during courses.

Erasmus students can only join student activities mainly organised by ESN (Erasmus Student Network) as a result, they remain isolated within the Erasmus jar having only limited interaction with Turkish buddies for their guidance in university life.

In the survey, it was found out that international students have a tendency to come together with Turkish students in university social life and they are also expecting international offices to organise activities to bring both international and Turkish students together. By taking this expectation into account, we have begun to organise activities to bring them collectively. In order to decrease the impact of language barrier, we have been organising some activities for Erasmus students in cooperation with various social student groups in university that requires less language

competency. We are organising activities such as riding bicycles in student groups, ESN Social Erasmus projects – like visiting children hospitals, kindergartens, and rehabilitation centres- or collecting wastes in a natural area so that all the students can come together for commonly accepted ideals. On the academic side, now English taught lectures are being offered more often and not only for incoming Erasmus students, but also open for the election of local or fulltime international students. These activities and a more international medium of the classes, build a bridge between the students from different regions of the world, as well as Turkish students. According to our experience, in the first instance there is need for patience in bringing Erasmus students and Turkish students together but after a while they begin to enjoy from collective activities. By organising such collective activities and lectures, we intend to break through the isolation of Erasmus students to a certain extent.

As the students expressed the lack of cultural activities to attend in the university, we tried to organize and promote joint cultural activities together with the diplomatic and cultural missions in Ankara, such as organizing "Greek Culture Day", "Italian Culture Day" or "Europe Day Celebrations". These organizations and leisure activities held together with ESN gave us a good chance to bring Erasmus students together with other international student groups. Ankara University has around 3000 international students and increasing the number of such joint social and cultural activities, helps us to build bridges between different cultures.

Another way of keeping Erasmus students involved with the activities around the city and the university is to get help from the technology. Ankara University has developed an application for smart phones which is being used by incoming and outgoing Erasmus students and this helps us to announce all activities quickly and efficiently. The students can have essential information about the city and the university through the app and also can have access to basic documents about their mobility. A dictionary which has daily conversation phrases is included to facilitate the communication of incoming students with the locals, especially in the first days upon arrival.

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COMPARING THE CULTURES BASED ON ERASMUS STUDENT EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

Erasmus + is the biggest European exchange programme. It enables students to spend a semester in one of their home institution's partner institution or do their internship in another country, giving them the opportunity to meet new people, learn a new languages and experience different cultures. Although in todays 'online' society, differences in general fade due to availability of information, cultural differences are rooted in every society. In order to show the cultural differences, interviews were done with seven students from three different countries (Greece, Turkey and Lithuania) that were doing their Erasmus mobility for studies at Zagreb University of Applied Sciences. Students were asked same questions regarding the everyday life in Croatia. All four cultures were compared using the Hofstede and Lewis cultural models as well as through the students answers, showing that cultures and their values are at the core of behavior and at the core of the perception of other peoples' behavior.

Key words: Erasmus exchange, cultural differences, intercultural communication, Hofstede cultural dimensions, The Lewis model

1.   INTRODUCTION

Each of us is different. Each of us thinks and feels differently, that is what makes us human. However, as much as we would like to think that we are completely unique, there are certain characteristic that connect us with other individuals, at least with the ones from the same areas or countries. According to Dutch social psychologist, Geert Hofgstede, every person carries within him/herself patterns of thinking, feeling and potentially acting what we learned throughout our lifetime, and such patterns of thinking are called mental programs and the source of one's mental programs lies

within the social environments in which one grew up and collected his/her experiences – it starts with the family and continues in the neighborhood, school, workplace, country and it is called culture [1]. Therefore one can argue that each individual's behavior as well as their perception of other people's behavior is a reflection of the culture in which he/she has been brought up. These differences based on the country of upbringing can especially be seen with Erasmus students. Although the assumption can be made that for majority of the individuals who decide to experience a stay abroad, a certain curiosity and desire of encounter with different cultures exist, the preliminary idea of Erasmus was actually given to academic aspect and cooperation between institutions, and not to intercultural communication and bonding [2]. A research conducted on Spanish and British Erasmus placement students, has shown that the most relevant issues at the beginning of their placements both display a positive attitude towards the host country; although they consider that identifying and solving conflicts and misunderstandings pose the greatest challenge they regard themselves flexible enough as to adapt to new cultural environments [3]. Furthermore, a study on European students in Turkey has shown that prejudice can be a large factor in adjusting to a foreign culture and for intercultural communication to truly work, people need to assess their assumptions and ask why they hold those ideas or beliefs [4].

As Hofstede argues, culture is a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partially shared with the people who live or have lived in the same social environment. The core of the culture is formed by values. Values are invisible until they become evident in behaviors, but culture manifests itself in visible elements through symbols, heroes and rituals [5]. Furthermore values are feelings with an added arrow indicating a plus or a minus side; such as evil versus good, dirty versus clean or dangerous vs safe [1]. Although, in our everyday lives we rarely pay attention to these values, once an individual is put into an unknown situation and culture, the values become apparent and obvious. There are several ways in which these cultural differences can be measured; two have been used in this research – Cultural dimension theory introduced by Gert Hofstede and The Lewis model introduced by Richard Lewis.

In order to test both models a set of questions, regarding behaviour and habits, was sent via e-mail to a group of Erasmus exchange students from Greece (two students), Turkey (four students) and Lithuania (one student) who were spending a semester at Zagreb University of Applied Sciences in Croatia. Students were also sent the image of The Lewis model and asked if they agree with their county's characteristics portrayed in the model.

According to The Lewis model, Greece, Croatia and Lithuania are all placed between linear active and multi-active type, the position on the triangle places these countries between the two types but closer to the multi-active type. According to this model Greeks can be described as warm, emotional, impulsive and loquacious. Croats are

fairly similar, somewhat leaning toward linear type, while Lithuanians are closest to the linear type, but still remaining on the multi-active type part of triangle, making them more factual and cool than Croats and Greeks.

At the same time, Turkey fits between multi-active type and reactive type; therefore according to this model, Turkish people can be described as somewhat warm and emotional while being good listeners, patient and subtle.

When compared via Hofstede model, the similarities and differences between the countries somewhat differed from those shown by the Lewis model. Using the table available on the web site https://geert-hofstede.com, a comparison was made between Croatia and Greece, Croatia and Lithuania and Croatia and Turkey. The results shown in the table were compared to the student answers, showing that although the general characteristics of these cultures do match the theoretical ones, there are some student observations that do not fit the general characteristic.

2. CULTURAL DIMENSION THEORY VS THE LEWIS MODEL

Cultural dimensions theory is a framework for cross-cultural communication which describes the effects of a society's culture on the values of its members, and how these values relate to behavior, using a structure derived from factor analysis [5]. In this theory, there are six dimensions through which Hofstede explains different cultures/values in different countries. The six dimensions are: Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term Orientation, and Indulgence.

Power Distance deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal and it is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Individualism refers to the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members; meaning that in an individualist society people look after themselves and their direct family only, while in a collectivist society people belong into groups that take care of them in exchange for loyalty. Masculinity is a dimension that indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner. Uncertainty Avoidance refers to the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known. Fifth dimension, Long Term Orientation describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future. If a society is normative it means that it prefers to maintain traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion, as oppose to the societies that encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future [5]. Finally dimension is Indulgence, which is defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised. On one side of this dimension is

indulgence which refers to the relatively weak control, while relatively strong control is called restraint [5].
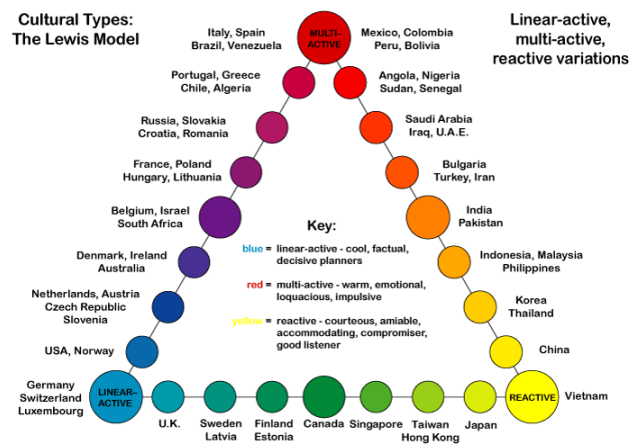

Figure 3 Cultural Types: The Lewis model [6]

Another model has also been used to compare cultures – The Lewis model. Richard Lewis, the author of the book When Cultures Collide, introduces the idea that based on behavior; humans can be divided into three clear categories. These three categories are: Linear-active, Multi-active and Reactive.

As presented in the Figure 1, Linear active category refers to the behavior that includes characteristics such as: doing one thing at the time, carefully planning all the activities, polite but direct, job oriented, sticks to the facts, truth before diplomacy and separated social and professional [6]. Multi-active behavior includes people who talk most of the time, do several things at once, which are emotional and display their feelings, are people oriented, use feelings before facts, are impatient and mix social and professional [6]. Reactive behaviors refers to the people who listen most of the time, look at general principles, conceal their feelings, never confront, are patient, use subtle body language and connect social and professional [6].

3. TESTING THE MODELS

3.1 CROATIA VS GREECE

When comparing Croatia and Greece, in terms of *Power Distance*, Croatia has a score of 73, while Greece has a score of 60. In this sense, according to Hofstede, Croatian people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. At the same time, Greek society believes hierarchy should be respected but the inequalities amongst people are acceptable. In terms of *Individualism* both countries have scored similar and both countries are considered to be collectivist oriented, meaning that these societies function in a way in which people belong to 'groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty [7]. While Croatia scored 40 in terms of *Masculinity*, indicating that it is relatively feminine; with a score of 57, Greece is considered to be a medium ranking masculine society; success oriented and driven, where men consider it a personal honor to take care for their family [7]. Furthermore, regarding the *Uncertainty Avoidance*, Greece

scored 100 showing that Greeks are not at all comfortable when it comes to unknown situations. With the score of 80, Croats are seem to handle uncertain situations fairly better, however, they do have an emotional need for rules, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, and precision and punctuality are the norm [7]. In comparison, according to Lewis, one of the ways to motivate Croats is indicating that you can be relaxed about certain laws and regulations [6].

In terms of *Long Term Orientation*, Croats seem to be pragmatic; while Greeks lean toward normative society – preferring to maintain traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. Finally, when compared in *Indulgence* - dimension defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised, with the score of 33 Croatia is considered to be restrained. Greece, on the other hand, has no clear preference between indulgence and restraint [7].

According to Lewis, Greeks are verbose, theatrical and intense. Language is declaimed in a manner similar to Spanish; eye contact during address is the strongest in Europe. Emotion is used as a weapon in discourse. At the same time, Croats are somewhat are restrained in expressing them, but they choose their words carefully for best effect. Same as Greeks, Croats think highly of the eye contact. In general, both countries have a similar Mediterranean mentality, but Croats appear to have certain lack of confidence [6].

Comparing the two models and the results both countries have scored, it is apparent that more differences are presented through the Hofstede model, in which Croats and Greeks are placed next to each other. But when compared to the student answers about habits and behaviors of Croats, some dimension seem to be differently portrayed. Greek students stated the following: Croatian people are mostly polite, and helpful when asked for help, and they are also outgoing – confirming the characteristics described in Lewis model. At the same time, although Hofstede's model characterizes Croatian people to have an "inner urge to be busy and work hard", Greek students think differently.

"I don't know how many hours they work per day but every time sun comes out, all coffee places are full" stated one of the Greek students. This statement does not justify the score of 80 regarding the uncertainty avoidance, but it does confirm the society in Croatia to be a feminine one.
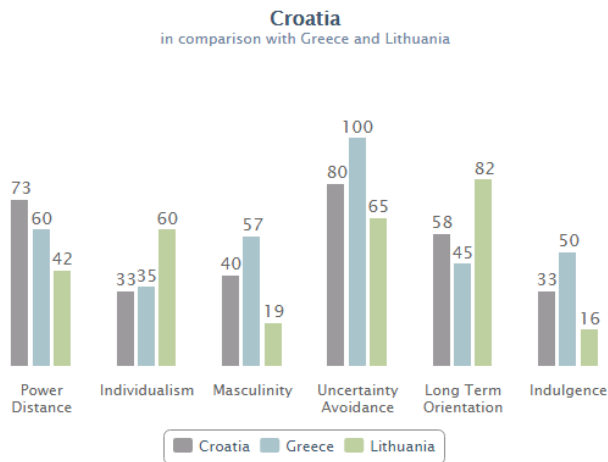
Figure 2 Comparisonof Croatia, Greece and Lithuania via Hofstede dimensions [7]

When it comes to the relationship with teachers, from the Greek student perspective, Croatian teachers are polite, helpful, kind and good English speakers. This can be explained with the high score in the *Long Term Orientation* dimension, which places Croatia among those societies that encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future, unlike Greeks who prefer to maintain traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. When shown the Lewis model, both Greek students strongly agree with the characteristics presented in the model.

3.2 CROATIA VS LITHUANIA

According to Lewis model, Croatia and Lithuania have fairly similar characteristics. Both countries lean toward multi-active type. At the same time, when compared in through the Hofstede dimensions, the difference between the countries is more significant. Unlike Croats, who accept a hierarchical order, Lithuanians show the tendencies to prefer equality and a decentralization of power and decision-making. Furthermore, unlike Croatia, Lithuania is a strongly individualistic country. As a society they do not care too much about what other people do as long as it does not annoy them [7]. In terms of *Masculinity* there is also a significant difference between Croatian and Lithuanian society. Although both countries belong to so called feminine society, with the score of 19 (as oppose to Croatia's 40) Lithuanians have a tendency to feel awkward about giving and receiving praise, are modest and keep a low profile, and usually communicate with a soft and diplomatic voice in order not to offend anyone [7].

Uncertainty Avoidance is the dimension in which these two countries are most similar – both countries score high. With a score of 65 on this dimension, Lithuanians have a built-in worry about the world around them, which society provides legitimate outlets for [7]. In terms of *Long Term Orientation*, Lithuanian society is extremely pragmatic, while Croats are just fairly pragmatic. Also both countries are considered

to be restrained when it comes to dimension of *Indulgence*, with Lithuania scoring 16 and Croatia 33.

According to Lewis, Lithuanians are less reserved than Latvians and less pragmatic than other Baltic nations, they are good listeners, but like to speak, so it is better not to address them at too great a length [6].

From the perspective of a Lithuania student in Croatia the characteristic do overlap with those in the Hofstede model and with those of Lewis, although the student perception slightly differs. According to the Lithuanian student Croatian people are very nice and helpful when asked for help, while Lithuanians are also helpful, but not all of them would take some time out of their day and help another. This can be related to strong individualism score of Lithuanians. At the same time, according to the Lithuanian students, Croatian people are not really open.

"To have a decent conversation about anything, you have to question your way into it, ask questions and be really focused, it is not really easy to communicate. Lithuanians in this aspect are easier to talk to, because we talk a lot, and to keep conversation you do not need to try hard, it seems like topics just flow from one to another. Lithuanians have their comfort zone, but they get out of their comfort zone really easily when meeting new people and talking. When Lithuanians engage in the conversation, they do not have any secrets any more; I believe that we as a nation are very open. As for Croatians, as I said I think they are more private people, they do not tell you much and it is hard to make friends because of this." Interestingly, based on the Hofstede's masculinity dimension, Lithuanians are supposed to be modest and keep a low profile, and usually communicate with a soft and diplomatic voice in order not to offend anyone [7].
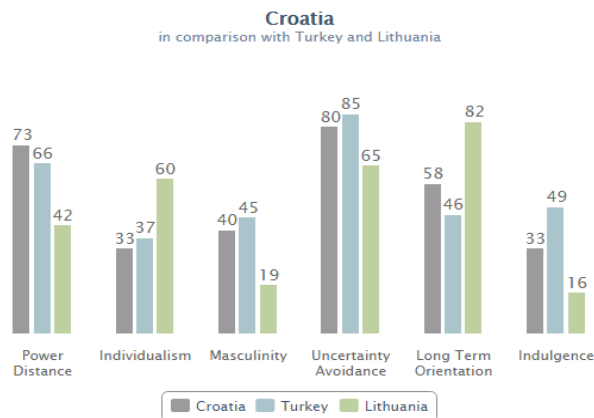
Figure 3 Comparison of Croatia, Turkey and Lithuania via Hofstede dimensions [7]

As far as working habits are concerned, from the perspective of the Lithuanian students, Croatians are laid back and have coffee breaks really often. Lithuanians on the other hand are workaholics, and they don't have as much freedom at workplace as Croats. This confirms the high score in *Long Term Orientation* dimension, portraying the Lithuanians as people with strong propensity to save and invest thriftiness, and perseverance in achieving results. Furthermore, he states that Croatian lecturers use a lot of gestures with hands, and

focus on the individual work with students. This again confirms the high score in the *Long Term Orientation* dimension.

3.3 Croatia vs Turkey

Although the Lewis model places Turkey on the other side of the triangle, portraying Turkish culture as somewhat multi-active with elements of reactive, as oppose to Croats who are supposed to be somewhat multi-active with elements of linear-active, when compared through Hofstede model, these two countries scored very similarly. In terms of *Power Distance*, same as Croatia (73), Turkey scored high (66) portraying Turkish culture as dependent and hierarchical [7]. Furthermore, same as Croatia, Turkey is a collectivistic oriented society, placing high importance on belonging to the groups who look after each other in exchange for loyalty. Furthermore both countries have a similar score in the *Masculinity* dimension (Turkey 45, Croatia 40) characterizing both as feminine societies where the softer aspects of culture such as leveling with others, consensus, sympathy for the underdog are valued and encouraged [7]. When it comes to *Long Term Orientation*, Turkish culture doesn't show a dominant cultural preference. The only significate difference between the counties is shown in the *Indulgence dimension*. While with the score of 33, Croatian society is considered to be restrained; Turkish society has scored 49 on the scale which means they can't be determines as either indulgent or restrained.

From the perspective of Turkish Erasmus students in Croatia, the differences between the two cultures are closer to those portrayed by the Hofstede dimension than to the Lewis model. However, considering the size of Turkey and the fact that behaviour may vary depending on the location. As Lewis argues, the Turkish communication style derives from its three main roots: Islamic, Mediterranean and Eastern (Ottoman, Seljuk) [6].

According to Turkish students most of Croatian people speak English and are very polite and helpful, while Turkish people are polite but majority do not speak English, keep to themselves and are not open to innovation. Furthermore, Croatian people are more outgoing and fun loving than Turks and conversation are easily started with Croatian people. People communicate more comfortable with each other in Croatia. Turkish people are more conservative about communication in general, as well as in men-women relationships, while busy work schedule does not allow them to spend much time in coffee shops and bars. Same as the Greek and Lithuanian students, Turkish students also noticed Croats affection for sipping coffee in the sun, and in regard to that aspect of Croatia, Lewis' description is much more accurate than the Hofstede one. According to Lewis, Croats are sincere and generous, eager to show you as much of their beloved country as possible. Croats are happy to share these

events and parties with strangers and visitors. As for eating and drinking, there is a lot of it. Socializing with friends in wine cellars and taverns is a way of life [6].

Turkish students also stated that Croatian they are very sincere and kind and nice to talk to, while Turkish teachers are far more formal and distanced. This, again, shows Croats as pragmatics. Also, when shown the Lewis model, all Turkish students strongly agree with the characteristics presented in the model.

4.   CONCLUSION

After comparing Croatia with Greece, Lithuania and Turkey through Hofstede dimensions and Lewis' model and cross-comparing them with the student experiences, it is apparent that general characteristics presented in the two models for the most part do overlap with the actual characteristic. However, what makes is more interesting is the different perception of the Croats shown in students' opinions. While Lithuanian student believes that Croats are hard to talk to, Turkish students stated that Croatians are very outgoing and easy to talk to. Based on this example alone, it is obvious that culture and its values are at the core of behavior and the perception of other peoples' behaviour. Although according to the Lewis model, Greece, Croatia and Lithuania should have similar characteristic, when compared through the Hofstede model, as presented in Figures 2 and 3, Croatia, Greece and Turkey appear to have more in common, while Lithuania scores significantly different. This difference can be due to the fact that Greece, Croatia and Turkey are considered to be Mediterranean countries, while Lithuania is a Baltic country. Although one can argue that the impact of today's online world that makes everything more available can influence the cultures and decrease the differences between them, the differences are still here. When faced with different culture in the real word, these differences show that values that we live by have deep roots in our environment and as such determine not only our behaviors but also our perception of others' behaviour and in order for Erasmus student exchange to be a positive experience, one needs to have an open mind and embrace the cultural differences while holding on to one's own values. Finally, in order to have a better understanding of the different cultures, it would be beneficial for the students if they were introduced to the Hofstede dimensions and the Lewis model before their mobilities.

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CREATIVE USAGE OF THE ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article was to collect and give ideas to Erasmus Coordinators about the possible usage of Organisational Support (OS). The OS is an available financial tool for all Universities participating in the Erasmus Program. There is no specific rule for what it has to be used for.

The University of Physical Education (Hungary, Budapest) has only regained its independence in 2014 (three years ago). Since then the coordinators have a greater responsibility as they are in charge for a whole University whereas before it was only a Faculty. This change has its ups and downs.

Our Erasmus OS is used in various ways; some of our ideas may be motivating for our colleagues. Other things that we spend the money on allocated to OS include organizing programs, buying food ingredients or other materials, and on salaries of our colleagues.

IN GENERAL

The OS grant is a contribution to any cost incurred by the institutions concerning activities in support of mobilities of students and staff, both inbound and outbound to comply with the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education in Programme Countries, and with the principles of the ECHE as reflected in the inter institutional agreements agreed in the case of institutions from Partner Countries.

PROGRAMS, EVENTS FOR FACULTY

"…preparation, reception and integration of mobile participants; and to keep these inter-institutional agreements updated"

Each year the Hungarian National Agency the Tempus Public Foundation organizes a meeting for the Erasmus Coordinators of the higher educational institutions. It is usually a three-day-long event, where the participants could learn about the most recent information connected to the Program as well as some good practices. There are several round tables and presentations are not only related to Erasmus but about further international programs (Ceepus, Stipendium Hungaricum, Campus Mundi, etc). The annual meeting takes place in the countryside and the program is arranged by different universities in cooperation with the NA. Our coordinators have the opportunity to participate in this event and cover the necessary fees from the OS grant.

Besides this there are several Erasmus related conferences and seminars where the participation could be financed by the OS. 2017 was the first year when our University participated in the EAEC. If the University does not want to spend from the OS it also remains a possibility to cover the cost of the mobility from the regular grant portion and conduct a Staff Mobility for Training.

PROGRAMS EVENTS FOR STUDENTS

The first event we organize for students that we host is the Orientation Day. We do not only provide these students with information but also with promotional materials and some traditional food (mainly sweets).

1. ábra Orientation

It is our task to organize several international sport events for them, where the costs of drinks and other needed items (e.g. plaster, bandage, paper, pen, diploma) are covered using the OS grant.

2. ábra International Football Cup

International dinners were previously arranged at the dormitory of the University but now we can organize them in other locations. During such an event our students and mentors cook together and have a common dinner afterwards. We found dinners to be easier to arrange while lunch could only be made together on weekends, when students tend to travel or they likely to have other activities. A big group can not cook at the same time, however if there are also games set-up the remainder of the students can occupy themselves while the food is being prepared, yet they do not need to leave the chefs all alone.

3. ábra Cooking party

One of our biggest projects is the annual Erasmus Dance performed at the Freshmen's Ball of the University. In Hungarian freshmen's balls have a great traditional value. For the incoming part-time students it is rather just a party, but by actively participating it may mean something more for them. As we are a sport University we aimed to introduce some sort of an exercise, then we came up with the idea of the Erasmus Dance. Our incoming students have a class where they can learn the choreography thus they collect credits for the activity. Should students who are studying to be a dance teacher, we offer them the possibility to create and instruct the choreography so they can gain professional experience and credit by completing this as an internship.

4. ábra Freshmen's Ball in Tracksuits

If clothes or other materials are needed, OS grant is also available to cover the expenses.

"Ensure efficient mentoring and supervision arrangements of mobile participants"

If students require we send mentors to fetch them from the airport, to help them find their apartment and to assist them with anything else they might require we will make them available.

"Facilitate the integration of incoming mobile participants in the HEI"

Our Mentors are helping the incoming students in their everyday life, and at the same time assisting us by organizing and arranging different events (cultural excursions, play nights, get togethers, picnics, Christmas party, Easter traditions).

5. ábra Christmas Party

Even though we are no longer part of the Semmelweis University we keep good relation with their ESN section – ESN Semmelweis.

If incoming students wish to take part in the Freshman's camp members of our office help to arrange their participation. This camp offers one of the greatest possibility for integration due to the fact that the Hungarian students attending do not know anyone prior to arrive either. This camp is not yet connected to studies therefore students can have a more relaxed and convenient time, they only focus remains to have fun and make some friends (Hungarians and foreigners alike).

6. ábra Taiwanese Student at the Hungarian Freshmen's camp

Every year we have an event for the next year's possible outgoings (an information night). For this event we invite all Hungarian Erasmus alumni as well as the foreign students studying with them. This programme has had a great success in the past. Students were asked to prepare their local food and inform their fellow mates about their country when choosing their destination.

DIFFERENT MATERIALS

For most of our events we try to arrange some food or snacks. In case of programs like International Night, sport events, Orientation, Information Night students either give us a list and we take the initiative to collect the materials and ingredients or the students are given a detailed guide how to buy them on their own. Each time the International Relations Center has to request the money from the university; after it has been approved on higher levels, the coordinators can receive the amount. When the settlement is being completed all the spent amounts have to be certified by an invoice stating the name, address and VAT number of our University. If the invoice is not issued correctly the refund process can not be completed. In this case students have to pay the costs (fortunately it has never happened so far).

We provide our incoming Erasmus students with a tracksuit and our outgoing Erasmus students with a t-shirt. We think it is a good way for promotion, since they use these clothes regularly and are keen to take several pictures in it.

Our main focus is on the incoming students as they are ones with us throughout the year, however we certainly provide the ones who travel abroad to continue their studies with all the necessary help.

To promote Staff Mobilities a large university flag has been created. We take a picture with all of our incoming faculty and post them on social media. Our Incoming staff members also have the opportunity to receive some promotional materials such as pens, pendrives and folders, but they do not get clothes.

7. ábra Eugenia Garcia on Teacher's Mobility

SALARIES

"linguistic and intercultural preparation provided to both incoming and outbound students and staff, complementary to the Erasmus+ Online Linguistic Support"

At our institution students have a 6-credit subject called Hungarian Language and Culture. Within the framework of this module students have some extracurricular programs outside the University. Should they go to a Museum or any other place, with the help of OS the entrance fee is partly or fully covered. In 2017 there was an attempt to connect this subject with the regular students who, within the framework of the Tourism subject organized a sightseeing program for the incomers.

For the moment, we do not offer all subjects in English that are available in Hungarian at the institution. Therefore, for subjects which only apply to the Erasmus Students we pay the teachers a salary supplement. Only the additional work hours are financed by the OS.

OTHERS

Some Universities in Hungary provide Health Insurance for all the outgoing and/or incoming students. In regard to the Science Without Borders Program (SWBP) all of our students benefitted from this kind of insurance, even the cost of their medicine was covered.

We are planning to introduce insurance packages for our students in the future as for SMP students Health Insurance, Liability Insurance and Accident Insurance is required. Our University covers all taxes related to the above-mentioned expenses from the OS.

Some Universities provide Scholarship for mentoring, which means that their student mentors sign a contract and they are obliged to be accessible for the exchange students whenever it is needed.

We are facing problems with the recognition of subjects. Even though all subjects completed abroad are recognized, these credits do not appear on the students' grade point average, based on which the scholarship for studies is given at our University. In exchange for excellent results, we would like to provide them with a separate grant, like a compensation towards these students. Even if the recognized subjects could be counted in the GPA, not all partner universities could provide us the results on time due to the different semester schedules in the different countries.

Above we described several methods that our university currently uses or we heard to allocate the received OS. Of course there are always place to improve. During the annual Erasmus coordinators' conference we have the opportunity to learn more about how other institutions benefit from the support and collect new ideas to improve our services.

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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY: CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

In the last couple of years, internationalization has become much popular within Higher Education Institutions and their managements. More and more students are travelling abroad, changing universities after every level of their education and even attending several universities during one level of their studies. One of the EU's goals is that at least 20% of the student population should spend some period of their studies on mobility abroad. But it is not enough to say that you want more incoming students and staff at your university. You will need to have the support and take the necessary measures to keep international exchange students happy and overcome the obstacles and challenges. This session will have an overview of the challenges and suggest good practices in both Europe and beyond.

Russian universities are not exempt from the current challenges of international student mobility, which are facing European universities

Employability is certainly one of the main factors, which pushes Russian students to spend a semester or a full academic year abroad. Study periods abroad enable students to improve and get new skills, which are more and more requested in the labour market. This can have a dramatic impact in the future career of a graduate; because the chances of getting a high-qualified job can increase considerably if a student at the completion of his/her studies has acquired solid language, international and communication skills, which can be gained after a study period aborad. For instance, Russian students are highly attracted in carrying out their studies in the main cities of the country (Moscow and St. Petersburg), which can offer a better

career opportunities. Nevertheless, the labour market in such cities is very competitive and having international and linguistic skills can determine dramatically the professional path of a graduate.

For economic and geographic reasons, Europe is a region very attractive for Russian students and higher education institution. This is confirmed by the UNESCO statistics on global flow of tertiary-level students, showing that among the top-5 countries of outgoing Russian student mobility, four are European counties (Germany, Czech Republic, United Kingdom and France)[13].

The Bologna Process is certainly an important element fostering mobility and enhancing cooperation between Russian universities. Since 2003, the Russian Federation is a member of the Bologna Process and since then it has carried out important reforms, which changed considerably its higher education system. Some of most significant are the introduction of ECTS system and the division in three cycles of the higher education (bachelor, master and PhD).

The opportunities of cooperation between Russian Federation and European universities have been further enhanced thanks to the European Union programme Erasmus+ and most specifically Erasmus+ international credit mobility with Partner countries (Key Action 1), which was launched in 2015.

Such programme, which helps the European higher education institutions to increase academic mobility with universities of all regions of the world, is an important tool for Russian universities as well to boost cooperation with partner universities from Europe. About 10% of the budget that the European Union spend each for KA107 Erasmus+ international credit mobility is allocated to cooperation with Russian higher education institutions, which correspond to about 1600 mobilities per year[14].

If European Union higher education institutions are celebrating in 2017 the thirtieth anniversary of the Erasmus programme, and have already assimilated many mechanisms characterizing the Erasmus programme, universities of partner countries are still in the first stages of learning how such educational programme works. For instance, a detailed preparation of a study plan before the mobility period, formalized in the learning agreement, the practice of developing mobilities for administrative staff, recognition of credits after the completion of a mobility period abroad are some of the main challenges that universities from partner countries are facing. Russian universities, which have already double of joint programmes with

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[13] http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow
[14]

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/events/coordinators_conference_2014/eplus_international_20141003.pdf

European higher education institution have already developed mechanism of recognition to

Nevertheless, Erasmus+ international credit mobility offers the possibility to be involved in exchange programmes professors, faculties and department, which have little experience in educational exchange programme with Europe. Many of the documents and rules, which are required by the Erasmus+ programme are new and not easy to understand at the beginning. To overcome such difficulties it is necessary an intense and high engagement of peoples both of programme and partner countries universities.

Some of the best practices identified during the implementation of Erasmus+ international credit mobility at Peoples' Friendship Universities can be summed up in the following points.

Firstly, good coordination between faculties and international relation office is crucial aspect to ensure the good implementation of exchange programme, offer better services to international students and to develop new partnerships or carry out new projects.

Secondly, the training staff mobilities can be an excellent tool to help academic and administrative staff in learning good practices from partner universities and facilitate in elaborating a solution to a specific problem (for instance, recognition of credits).

Last but not least, disseminate as much as possible the results of successful exchange projects/mobilities is very important to motivate other participants in such kind of projects. For instance, at Peoples' Friendship University of Russia information about Erasmus exchange programme are continuously published in social networks and promoted as much as possible in a specific page dedicated only to the Erasmus+ programme and in other university pages (students' organizations, faculties, university cultural associations).

What challenges do we face with international student mobility?

First is the lack of support at national level with regards to internationalization. Government policy plays a key role as it can facilitate or hinder the internationalization of higher education. National higher education internationalization strategies can impact national competitiveness through attracting international research initiatives, corporate partnerships and facilitating the mobility of student and faculty talent. Governments can leverage the latent strengths dispersed across their own systems and local economies through facilitating international partnerships. Foreign students contribute financially, as often expected by governments, but are also likely to enrich the education provided by institutions.

Then is the weak marketing for international students. International students make a significant contribution to the universities and countries in which they study and they deserve better. Their very presence enlightens and brightens our worlds. They make teaching a pleasure. Their passion and drive make up for the lack of enthusiasm exhibited by home students who at times appear to take their place at university for granted. Moreover, if you really want to get 'economic' about it, international students help to make several specialist courses – and even universities – financially viable.

Finally is the lack of enough English taught courses/degrees. Such courses don't just attract international students. They are also popular with home students, particularly at masters' level, who want to gain an English language qualification alongside international students without leaving their own country.

What would be the Best Practices to follow:

All teaching programs should have a clear international profile. This includes offering modules taught in English as an integrated part of all teaching programs, and inclusion of English teaching materials in each program and mobility

The establishment of a Summer University is a good practice. Some universities encourage research students to undertake international experiences and research placements, while others establish professional skills summer schools for their research students. Imperial College London has established an annual international "collaborative professional skills development summer school" with partner universities in Singapore and Hong Kong, while UCL established the Higher Education London Outreach programme to give UCL students at all levels experience in working in business through specific consultancy projects.

The introduction of a higher level of international collaboration in creating content and establishing degree programmes Collaboration should facilitate exchange of researchers and lecturers. Other best practices include the introduction of methods for accumulating and transferring credits and hosting international staff for lectures. Last is the internationalization at home for non-mobile students and staff. A student becoming international at home can go abroad later without particular problem

How do you achieve internationalization at home?

Universities should have E-learning courses that can provide international education without leaving the home country. Video – conferences can be used with international partners where the students can ask specific questions in accordance with their interest; The organization of networking groups, where students can interact with persons who have more international experience is another good practice. By involving non-mobile students in cultural and academic international

activities, you boost their confidence in becoming mobile or by inviting international personalities (professors, researchers, trainers) to participate in conferences in the home university and encourage students to participate in lectures you achieve this goal. Universities must include in the curricula new courses, such as professional courses and communication in a multinational environment, in order to create a frame for internationalization as a starting point for future experiences.

Here is a summary of what needs to be done:

Universities should focus on their internationalization strategy. They should enhance the quality and diversity in programmes involving the mobility of students, of academic and administrative staff. They should increase focus on the internationalization of the curriculum and stimulate bilingual and multilingual learning. Universities must better align the internationalization of higher education with internationalization at other levels of education. They need to give greater attention to work placements in internationalization of higher education. They must break down the barrier between internationalization of research and education to enhance opportunities.

The recognition of the importance of "Internationalization at home" is one of the priorities to be taken into account and include it as an important pillar in the internationalization strategy. The development of joint degrees is another factor which is important for the future of internationalization of higher education. Digital learning and virtual mobility which replace traditional forms of student and staff mobility should be stimulated .Lastly the establishment of off shore campuses can improve the internationalization of the home campus.

Internationalization opens many possibilities for higher education institutions and, managed well, can yield a range of benefits for the institution and its broader community, including, but not only, its students and faculty.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE PROFESSORIAL INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this longitudinal qualitative case study research is to study professors' intercultural communication competencies development at a professional, strategic, social and individual level during some international teaching staff mobility programmes. The author applied the triangulation technique in data collection using official and personal documents, autobiography, diary writing, lecturing preparations, participatory classroom observation and non-structural interviewing. Text content analysis was then applied. The results show indications of multiple benefits to academic professors' international mobility.

Key words: *case study, intercultural communication competencies*, *longitudinal qualitative research, teaching staff mobility, text content analysis.*

THEORY BACKGROUND

The research of intercultural communication, until recently, referred to the studies of interpersonal understandings in a cross-cultural experience. Globalization and multiculturalism have expanded the communication studies' interest to the investigation of communication types for a pluralistic society, the contribution of communication in respecting diversity (Bennet, 1998:1) and determination of communication competencies for democratic world citizenship. While social

science, critical and interpretative perspectives were the most important concepts for studying intercultural communication, the 'multi-centered' form currently prevails and alternative approaches bring new models (Humphrey, 2007:5-7). There are numerous definitions of intercultural communication competencies (ICC) as it has been a largely studied topic in the last thirty years. Deardorff quotes more than fifty different scholars' views (Deardorff, 2006:249). What arises as a common opinion is that ICC means having specific knowledge, skills and awareness, including attitudes and values (Byram, 1997 and Neuner, 2012:34) and advocating proficiency in the host tongue as the focus of the intercultural competencies development (Fantini, 2009:459). The main problem in determining its meaning is that most definitions treat intercultural competencies too generally or list attributes that do not fit together (Deardorff, 2006:253) while developing culture-specific or culture general theories of communication competence (Collier, 1989:289). Although scholars, experts and scientists reputable in researching intercultural subjects studying different intercultural topics agree on about 21 components of which intercultural competencies consist, the ICC definition primarily depends on how one defines culture (Deardorff, 2006:249). This paper applies understanding culture as communication itself (Hall, 1998:53-55) and as the product of communication processes (Bolten, 2005: 17-43). It partly relies on the Western idea finding intercultural competencies as part of individuals, but the humanistic frame of personal and cultural relativism turns to be more applicable. There are at least four actual approaches to ICC research as the subject of communication discipline: ethnography of speaking, cross-cultural attitude, behavioural skills and cultural identity approach (Collier, 1989: 290-298). The individual is in the focus of ethnographic approach where it is viewed in contact with others, the behavioural skills approach uses self-report methods to inspect skills rather than knowledge (Collier, 1989: 291) as well as the subjective and interpretative cultural identity approach (Gudykunst & Nishida in press in Collier, 1989:295). Since intercultural communication tends to understand cross-cultural education almost only as a subjective phenomenon, interculturalists primarily research individuals and relationships focusing on raising consciousness to facilitate intercultural relationships and to understand how cultural differences affect interpersonal cultural interaction (Bennet, 1998:2-18). Van den Boom defines individual intercultural competence as "(…) an individual's capability to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication (…)", and the development results in the motivation for effective communication, readiness to learn and capability to apply this knowledge (van den Boom, 2003 in Humphrey, 2007:29). Even though intercultural competence measurement primarily relies on its definition (Klemp, 1979:41 in Deardorff, 2006:242), scientists principally agree upon the best methods for measuring assessment. Listed from the most accepted, those are: case studies, interviews, mix measures, qualitative measures, analysis of narrative diaries, self-report instruments, observation by others, judgement by oneself and others, developing indicators and triangulation in data collection which rise the qualitative research validity (Deardorff, 2006:252). In addition, a variety of tests measure

different aspects of intercultural competencies such as normative, predictive, formative and summative (Fantini, 2009:465). Fantini consequently lists 90 various test types used to estimate different aspects of intercultural competence assessment (Fantini, 2007: 87-94 and 2009: 466-474). The focus of this research is to examine the process of professorial ICC development during teaching staff mobility programmes. The easiest way to do that is to identify, determine and describe differences occurring during time within a selected dimension of professors' ICC. YOGA is a self-evaluation form designed just for that purpose, appraising personal objectives, guidelines and assessments (Fantini 1995. in Humphrey, 2007:31), yet the author here uses the idea of it combined with other methods. Complementary to the perspective of the individual as an ICC producer is a German tradition by which ICC is primarily manifested as an action. Hence, to gain the aforementioned research outcome the author finds suitable the Jürgen Bolten's model of intercultural competence that classifies intercultural competencies into specific areas of action: professional, strategic, social and individual (Bolten, 2007:86; Praxmarer, 2010), while only the synergy between them makes an interculturally competent individual (Bolten, 2007:88). That perspective matches with the purpose of describing important domains in a professors' everyday life regarding the educational international mobility programme context. Professional intercultural competence refers to the specific professional knowledge, professional experience and knowledge of professional infrastructure. Strategic ones include organizational capabilities, knowledge management, as well as problem solving and decision making capabilities. Social intercultural competence means team capability, empathy and tolerance, capability to mediate and communicate, as well as capability to adapt. Lastly, individual intercultural competence implies readiness to learn, role distance, tolerance of ambiguity and optimistic basic attitude. This paper also continues on the thought of the intercultural communication process research including studying cultural adaptation through a developmental approach, which says that adapted persons become multicultural as they widen their horizons to host culture's specifics (Bennet, 1998:14-15). Generally, in the mobility context "(…) no matter at what level, format, or focus, (…) educational cross-cultural contact contributes to intercultural competence and (…) it is based on the idea that exposure to cultural differences is "broadening"." (Bennett 2009:S2). Hence, considering that "(…) intercultural competence is commonly a longitudinal and ongoing developmental process (…)" (Fantini, 2000:459) it is important to monitor it over time.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a longitudinal qualitative case study, using an individual - a university professor of communication sciences – as its sample unit, like in the educational and social service research "A teacher may be a case." (Stake, 1995:2). It is a commonly used method in the communication sciences research. This paper investigates four types of visiting professors' intercultural communication competencies during a

four-year period of several international teaching internships according to Bolten's spheres of intercultural competence: professional, strategic, social and individual. The objective is to describe changes in the professorial ICC quality during mobility. Therefore, the author conducted a case study single-system research design. It is applicable here as it serves to investigate changes or differences in a subject's life, and the process of development (Du Plooy, 2001:162-163). Furthermore, its evaluative nature shaped the main research question: What are the qualities of the changes in professorial intercultural communication competencies, which developed during the time of international mobility? The research refers to their participation in an academic teaching staff mobility programme at the Media Communications study programme of the Institute of Media Communications at the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Sciences, University of Maribor, Slovenia, as follows:

Program	Date	Visits duration
ERASMUS	3-7 June 2013	1 week
ERASMUS	6-12 October 2013	1 week
Internationalization	14 Nov - 12 Dec 2014	1 month
Internationalization	20-22 May 2015	3 days
Internationalization	4-5 June 2015	2 days
Internationalization	8 March -15 June 2017	3 months and one week (a semester)

Table 1. Mobility settings

The purpose of the paper, based on a single case of individual experience, is to give to the public of interest a scientific feedback about the communication effects of mobility programmes on the academic teaching staff. It is indicated that, among others „A case study is useful to investigate people's experiences of making adjustments." (Du Plooy, 2002:163). As the idea of the study exceeds the sole understanding of a specific professor's experience, and it is about to achieve the general understanding of the mobility benefits to academic teaching staff indicating developed intercultural communication competencies by a specific case, it could be denoted as an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995:3). In every study, researchers are those who determine the research design, conduct it, collect data and interpret results through their own subjective lenses. In this work, where the researcher and the research subject are the same person, the subjectivity comes to the utmost, that way becoming the main research problem. Thus, understanding the 'self' (Simons, 2009: 81-96) is the most relevant thing to do in this case study research. The author overbridged a part of the subjectivity problem by the triangulation technique as a mix-method approach providing a methodological validity to the study. Data were collected during all mobility periods by case study research suitable methods and then divided to those related to social and other connected to the historical, professional and individual context. Measurement of the *social context* was based on primary documents that regulate the professor's mobility arrangements and lecturing

preparation processes (McCulloh, 2011: 249-252) as well as on participatory and interactive methods such as classroom observation and non-structured interviewing. The data for *historical professional and individual context* were collected by autobiographical narratives, as the life history method is common in case study research (Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg, 1991:4). Moreover, diary writing is one of the methodologically legal self-report techniques in researching educational (Sá, 2002:149-168) and personal processes. Mobility contracts, activity timelines and overall mobility reports are *documents* providing useful data about the exact periods and duration of stay, scheduled working hours, courses description and realized topics as well as all other professors' activities during mobility, not closely related to lecturing, such as participation at conferences, as a jury member at the student's film festival and else. The *lecturing process* (including lectures, seminars and exercises) starts with the professors' preparation for the next subject unit. That process needs time, commitment and competencies, especially when it is about a part of a course's topic that is in the professorial domain, but it is not taught at their home institution and needs to be written in a foreign language and presented in front of new students at a foreign institution. As these are not everyday course preparation circumstances, they are sources of valuable data. *Classroom observation* was mainly directed to the overall students' reaction to all the elements of the teaching and learning process. The professor was paying attention to the quality of the contact with students that was accomplished upon her or their initiative and to the students' perception of the professor and her ICC in general. She also tried to perceive students using modes like "(…) 'voices', 'learning agenda' and 'listening' (…)" (Kirshan and Hoon, 2003 in Farelly, 2011:8-9), teaching courses, learning tasks, teaching methods, teaching materials and teaching tools. The research subject wrote down all her observations in a *classroom diary* right after the lectures as to collect objective data. *Non-structured interviewing* was used to collect data about the social relationships with the professor-mentor of the host institution, other professors, students, administration and with all others not connected to the university, but important for the subjects' life quality during her mobility stays. The research subject asked questions subtly during every day conversations three times during each stay (at the beginning, in the middle and at the end). To collect data about history of professor's professional and personal ICC, the author used an *autobiographical method* as an empirical research source for data collecting (Abrahão, 2012:30). The life narrative consists of professional curriculum vitae, including all those individual data that are in deep relation to her professional career and the motivation to choose Slovenia as a mobility destination. The author used to collect objective data of all daily professorial activities by compiling a list of meetings and events, including those not directly connected to lectures. For all other aspects of the individual's personal experiences, not connected to the professorial role of the research subject, the professor wrote an *intimate journal*, which gives subjective feedback on the taken processes in the form of opinions, emotions and the related physical circumstances. That way, the author also collected particular individual data in relation to professional aspects. Those *solicited paper-based diaries* were all written only for

the purpose of this research (Gibson, 1995:67, Jacelon and Imperio, 2005, Shelbe and Wildemuth, 2009:3 and others). Diary studies were here a noetic choice as they date back to the first century C. E. and social sciences have been using that research technique since the beginning of the 20th century (Shelbe and Wildemuth, 2009:1-2). The author then processed the collected data using *text content analysis.*

RESULTS

As this international mobility case was a new professional experience, the professor activated all the so far acquired *professional* intercultural communication competencies for its successful realization. During time, the professor expanded those connected to *specific professional knowledge*. Firstly, the cooperation on ten new courses needed an additional topic research effort according to the literature prescribed in appurtenant syllabuses, preparing teaching materials, making presentations and lecturing on foreign language(s). During the process of scientific knowledge expansion, the interest for the related research topics increased. Confirmation to that change is the presentation of the mobility experience on the ERACON conference, the designation of this scientific paper, as well as the conducted application for a bilateral interdisciplinary research project of the two institutions that followed, all of them not directly related to the professor's previous scientific interests. The experienced teaching process abroad broadened her overall pedagogical and didactical knowledge, improved and made more common communication with new colleagues and students with studying interests similar to the professors' initial ones. Regarding the *professional academic infrastructure*, the professor gained a deep insight into the differences and things in common between the home and host institution, as well as professional advancement. Furthermore, the fact that the host institution had rigorous conditions for academic advancement, especially in international proportions, is very important, as it is the reason the professors' motivation for professional efficacy and progress is now more intense. The developed *organizational capabilities* are one of the *strategic* intercultural communication competencies connected to carrying out all mobility process activities from their beginning to the end. Those are: networking with host institution professors, collecting required documentation and writing applications for teaching mobility programmes for the home and host institution, participating into the selection process for both partner institutions, writing activity proposals during the mobility time, travel and accommodation organization, cooperation into activity adjustments at the time or just before their performance, reviewing the conducted work, writing reports and staying in touch with the host institution for future projects. *Finance managing* includes all money transactions done within mobility. The most inconvenient part was that the professor had to invest her own money at the beginning of the process, and the amount increased proportionally as the mobility duration extended. It means that those who want to participate in that kind of mobility programmes need to have savings, or at least be wealthy. In this case, neither of the two occured: the professor had the average academic monthly income

for a scientific degree. Therefore, to single out a larger amount caused stress regardless of the fact that the home, or host institution (it depends of the mobility programme), reimburses the money invested in respect to the report on the conducted mobility activities, especially bearing in mind that the waiting time for the refund, in all mobility programmes, was longer than expected. The feeling about that reversible process, stress about using the money planned for everyday consumption, or being in the situation to loan it, were real difficulties that the professor had to cope with. The main goal of the teaching staff mobility programmes is to upgrade the teaching practice; thus, *managing* different strategies for the *teaching process organization* at the host institution was the main professorial occupation. *Spending free time* abroad during mobility is exceptionally valuable in the context of acquiring ICC: to communicate with colleagues and all other representatives of the host culture in nonprofessional and less formal environments, primarily in the context of accommodation, as well as daily meals, were the best way to experience first-hand gastronomical specialities and sightseeing. Other activities mainly refer to various ways of participation in regular popular culture events at the national, regional and local level. In this case, the professor did not have much free time, as the working schedule was very tight and the preparation for courses took a lot of time regarding the use of the two foreign languages in the teaching process communication. Hence, not planning her free time in advance and spending it depending on her mood after a busy day, she went to the ballet and opera a few times, to jazz concerts at a local bar and attended a few minor local manifestations. The rest of her spare time was spent walking, watching Slovenian television programmes and listening to local radio stations. It was necessary to rest after a whole day participation into multifunctional intercultural communication. To take advantage of all the benefits of that kind of gaining ICC, one needs to plan and integrate free time activities to the daily schedule. *Knowledge management* refers to knowledge (information, data and methods) sharing, cross-project learning, after-action reviews (feedbacks) and best practice transfer. The professor *shared* all kind of *knowledge* with all host colleagues, which increased the exchanged and acquired knowledge amount in a short period and expanded it with new themes. During *cross-project activities*, the professor raised the level of multidisciplinary communication competencies, making practical project proposals, review and report writing, exercised cooperation in intercultural educational project teams and coordination of project team activities. *Problem solving and decision-making* capabilities are the most frequent needed in educational process activities abroad. They include interpersonal, intrapersonal and team communication, analytical ability, critical thinking skills, logical and methodological approach as well as creativity. Even though the professor is excellent in this area of communication competencies, she perfected them by giving them an intercultural dimension. She found herself more creative in designing the teaching process, more critical in analysing her past lectures, more open, free and brave for trying experimental methods with students. *Logic connected ICC* can be found in all educational activities. For example, it manifested in the daily teaching organization problems occurring due to the schedule of the teaching halls use, when applying the

simplest solution was reasonable. She needed interpersonal ICC in the context of problem solving on a daily basis through all work organization activities. Her *critical thinking skills* increased by comparing the differences between home and host institution activities, especially those related to students, professional dialogues with colleagues directly connected to the mobility programme or not, during *analytical self-reports* after each working day, as well as during her free time. All *social* intercultural communication competencies manifested in everything adjusted for the professional purpose of the mobility visits. Hence, the professor had a great level of willingness to adapt to all social situations, including spending her professional and free time. *Team capabilities* cover the contribution to the positive team atmosphere, team attitude (willingness to work together), coordinating and taking responsibility, listening and giving feedbacks, being supportive and creating enthusiasm. Hers also increased during team work activities in the educational process context with an emphasis on *intercultural awareness* as team members were from different cultures. This case study records all the evident positive changes in the context of the colleague's casual activity delays. The professor tends to be prompt and punctual in tasks performing, therefore any delay caused by external agents created a great deal of stress. Cooperating with colleagues that have a different timing strengthened her tolerance. This change did not exclusively apply in the foreign intercultural environment, but became the professor's permanent value. Other *tolerance* indicators refer to the overall relationships with students during the teaching process and the administration in bureaucratic activities. Generally, the professor showed a great deal of *empathy* with all communication partners, but it was mostly shown in connection to students. It was simple for them to engage into the new educational environment primarily because they felt it was going to be easier than it really was due to the fact that they had to engage in activities and expand their intercultural communication competencies after somebody else's instruction. Additionally, the professor felt empathetically connected to regular colleague's obligations as she paid more attention to others than usually. The capability to *mediate and meta-communicate* refers to the listening, negotiation, deeper understanding of foreign paralanguage and nonverbal communication, as well as communicating about the process, regulation methods and the results of the communication with students and colleagues. *Individual ICC* primarily implies readiness to acquire means like motivation, language, culture, tradition and everyday life. The professor was interculturally *motivated* for the mobility in Slovenia because of her family roots. Namely, her father's mother was Slovenian so the professor felt a call to explore and expand that part of her family heritage. She was highly motivated to learn more about the Slovenian *culture and tradition* during everyday life. The mobility program helped to strengthen her Slovenian *foreign language* competencies in the original linguistic environment. During the whole mobility period, the professor felt the need to perfect language competencies, firstly in order to raise the teaching process quality. In the last month of the long mobility programme, the professor started with structured language learning. She found a language teacher and translator at the fellow academic institution herself and successfully attended 10 hours of proficient

Slovenian spoken language exercises. As she was learning the language, she used the new knowledge in the direct communication with students during the teaching process (oral and written) as well as in communication with colleagues, the administration and others outside the host institution. During that language-learning period, she raised her knowledge of the local community, culture, people and everyday life. The motivation for further upgrading the language is still high, as the professor found a Slovenian language teacher in her hometown after the mobility programme finished. That was the most considerable growth of ICC recorded in this case. Furthermore, the professor applied her awareness of the *role distance* in the communication to students, colleagues and coordinator in two different ways. Firstly, it was about distancing from her own cultural identity in everyday professional communication in order to openly experience host cultural features, secure mutual understanding and gain reliance. Secondly, to familiarize with students during lectures, the professor used references from her biography, especially connected to her Slovenian grandmother and the rest of her family, then she introduced herself as a daughter, sister, grandchild and else. She also mentioned her friends and close people's experiences. Students as well experienced her role as a mother since her nine-year-old son was present at a lecture as she was encouraged by her mentor to show him her life abroad. Spare time roles were only slightly mentioned in informal conversations with colleagues. The strongest role distance was manifested in the relationship with the mobility coordinator, who constantly created various informal, unconventional moments in the form of gifts to communicate primarily with the professor's son and then with her parents who took care of him during mobility periods. The idea was to help her family in coping with her absence and to assure them that the professor had not only professional, but also individual support from the host institution. Those interactions were emotionally strongest, leaving a permanent mark. During the mobility period, the professor raised her *tolerance of ambiguity* in the foreign language(s) use and reduced the need for certainty in all communication and educational activities and contacts. An *optimistic basic attitude* helped her to successfully accomplish all the mobility tasks. Even though the professor is by nature optimistic, success in cooperation and accomplishment of all assigned working tasks rose the level of her vitality, cheerfulness and willingness for joint projects to be continued. The overall research outcome shows that almost all registered changes in the development of the professorial intercultural communication competencies were positive. Therefore, this case could indicate that university professors gain various benefits from academic international mobility experiences.

CONCLUSION

The paper explores a university professor's intercultural communication competencies development during a few international mobility programmes. Positive changes were recorded applying Bolten's model in almost all professional,

strategic, social and individual intercultural competence aspects. The professor was very motivated to learn and actively participate in professional and cultural life abroad as well as to additionally learn a foreign language. She took part in more work activities than she planned and her professional interests expanded, in particular motivation for professional progress and applied creativity. Communication and presentation skills in different languages, as well as tolerance to others, increased, while a good sense of cooperation in cross-cultural teamwork resulted in the creation of new quality professional relationships. This case study research shows a high level of adaptation to the new cultural environment in the context of university teaching staff mobility programmes.

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