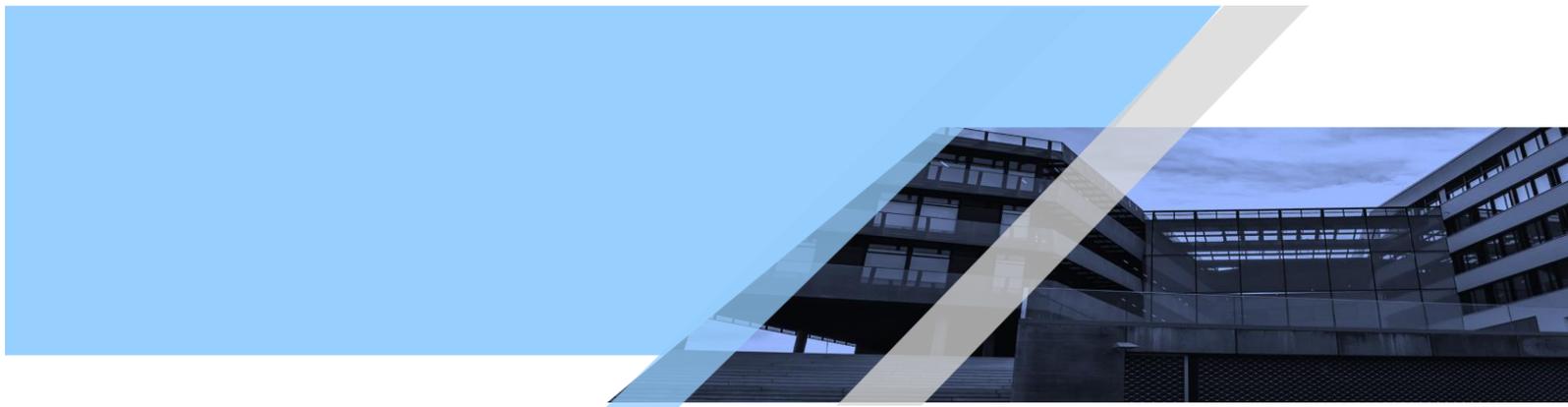




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Students' Mobility Capacity Building in Higher Education in Ukraine and Serbia / MILETUS



Analysis of deficiencies and potential in Ukraine and Serbia

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Introduction

Students' mobility is an important area in the educational process at HEIs in both Partner Countries (PCs), Ukraine and Serbia. Preliminary survey of the status and needs has shown varying degrees of experience in handling mobility runs and supporting structures within HEIs in PCs. Previous experience of some partners in projects INOTLES, I-Net, FUSE, SIPUS, and E-Internalization for collaborative learning and desire to participate in MILETUS point to existing foundation in mobility and readiness to expand expertise in it. However, PC HEIs are mostly donors of students travelling to EU countries for a semester or longer periods in real MRs, which testifies to an evident imbalance and need for other mobility formats and more cross-PC exchanges. In addition, PC partner HEIs demonstrate varying degrees of mutual ECTS recognition for in- and outbound exchange students, which is a common practice in exchange programs, so a unified evaluation scale for partners and cross-supervision and cross-evaluation by teaching staff (TS) in different PCs should be offered.

New solutions have to be worked out especially in light of globalization tendencies and the phenomenon of "brain drain" for PCs in order to enable enriching mobility of students and researchers and at the same time restrain the outbound flow of gifted people in real mobility runs. The tools such as virtual and blended mobility seem to offer a possible solution, but here capacity of PC HEIs has to be built and expanded to enable such initiatives, at first among pilot project partners, then with the participation of HEIs of their networks. Use of assistive and adaptive technologies enabling better social inclusion of disabled students also needs improvement to provide universal access to mobility. MILETUS attempts to address this shortfall by exploring needs of such students and developing mobility formats to include their wishes. MILETUS also attempts to help students in improving their employability chances to guarantee better post-mobility social and professional inclusion, which would be of use also to a wider group of students.

This assessment report contains an analysis of the results of specific survey aimed at identifying the deficiencies and potential in PCs HEIs with regard to organizing and performing mobility runs. The representatives of seven Ukrainian and Serbian HEIs participating in the project, Singidunum University (SU), PHEI Kharkiv University of Humanities "People's Ukrainian Academy" (PHEI KUH "PUA"), National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (NaUKMA), Mykolayiv National Agrarian University (MNAU), Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University (EENU), University of Novi Sad (UNS), and University of Niš (UNI), were surveyed by means of the questionnaire prepared by UNI.

1. General statements

The development and implementation of mobility in the internationalization strategies of individual higher education institutions is very important task. The universities in general are aware of this and have already adopted (or are in the course of that process) the corresponding strategic documents on academic mobility and internationalization of their education process at the institutional level. As a main part of an internationalization strategy, they represent the main pillar of academia - the teaching/learning process and the production of new knowledge between and among countries. The existing study programs can be markedly different in their structure, but are and/or will be built on the principle of deep academic collaboration, bringing important benefits to individuals, as well as to universities, national and regional education systems.

The analysis of the results of our survey shows that most of the participating universities, 5 out of 7, have already adopted their international strategies. Those that have not yet done this are PHEI KUH "PUA" and EENU. Although this survey has not explicitly requested the related information, the strategy usually implies the existence of a set of supporting documents that should create the basic prerequisites for implementing the full-scale internationalization process. It is assumed that the five universities mentioned above have adopted all the required documents.



Adopting a strategy of internationalization usually implies defining and adopting the strategy of academic mobility as well. Unfortunately, a smaller number of universities, only 3 (SU, NaUKMA, MNAU) out of 7, have stated that they adopted the strategy of academic mobility. The situation is not so critical considering that some of the universities have already adopted the rules on academic mobility and the documents on related methodologies.

The survey has further shown that 4 out of 7 HEIs (NaUKMA, EENU, UNI, and SU) have already adopted a rule book on double mentoring and joint doctoral degree. Two HEIs (PHEI KUH "PUA" and MNAU) have not yet adopted this document, and a representative of UNI was unsure on the status of this document in his/her institution and did not specify the reason.

The public awareness of the existing strategy regulations and availability of related documents are important issues in internationalization and mobility realization, so the next question in the surveys was whether the agreements on international bilateral, scientific and technical cooperation were available on the university and/or faculty web sites. Six out of seven HEIs indicated that all the existing agreements (EENU, UNS, SU, and MNAU) or at least most of these (NaUKMA and UNI) are available on the web, whereas only PHEI KUH "PUA" has not made these documents available on the web. Actually, PHEI KUH "PUA" does not seem to have worked much on the matter of internationalization and mobility, as this institution has not adopted any of the related documents so far. In contrast, the processes seem to have been most advanced at SU and NaUKMA, which apparently have adopted all the questioned documents. Four HEIs (EENU, UNS, UNI, and MNAU) have made mostly good progress so far, but are yet to work on completing their strategies and/or regulations, especially EENU, which still has not adopted its strategies on internationalization and mobility.

2. Status of the offices dealing with mobility

The existence of specific mobility oriented administration office, its organization and human resources are of particular importance for successful realization of academic mobility runs within the HEIs. The activity sphere of such offices may include preparation of inter-institutional agreements, organization and realization of the application and selection procedures for student and staff mobility runs at the institutional level, providing assistance to the students and staff in preparing the required mobility related documents, providing the necessary advising and other assistance to the selected outgoing students and staff, assisting the incoming students and staff in resolving the administrative and practical issues (insurance, visa, enrollment, housing, bank account, etc.), monitoring the overall process, reporting, etc. In general, the office employees should be educated above the average for ordinary office workers, fluent in foreign language(s), English at least, and well trained and motivated for performing the specific tasks that are not always the routine ones.

Our survey reveals that 5 out of 7 PC HEIs (NaUKMA, UNS, UNI, SU, and MNAU) have the specific offices and/or office system dealing with realization of academic mobility. Among these, 4 HEIs have the unitary, university based, office systems (NaUKMA, UNI, SU, and MNAU), and only a representative of UNS marked their system as a combined one that includes a university based unit and several decentralized units at different faculties/departments. It is however worth mentioning that international office at UNI also get support from faculty based academic and administrative coordinators, even though their faculties generally do not have specific offices dealing with mobility. The number of office employees working on academic mobility varies; offices at NaUKMA and SU have 3 employees each, MNAU has 7, central office at UNS has 3 permanent and 2 temporary contract employees plus unspecified number of employees at the faculties, and the office at UNI has just 1 paid administrative staff dealing with mobility, with an (academic) Institutional Coordinator and Vice-rector dealing partially also with mobility related administrative issues and 26 supporting academic and administrative coordinators at the faculty level. The education structure of the office employees is rather good, all employees having at least bachelor degree. Specifically, all office employees at NaUKMA, MNAU and UNI have either master or doctoral degrees, UNS has 2 bachelors and 3 masters, and SU has 1 employee with bachelor, 1 with master and 1 with doctoral



degree. The office performance so far has been rated as fair (MNAU), very good (NaUKMA, UNI, and SU) and excellent (UNS). All in all, the status of the offices dealing with mobility in five HEIs listed above could be generally considered as being at an acceptable level, even though the continuous efforts must be made to improve the situation. However, more significant efforts must be made at the remaining 2 HEIs (EENU and PHEI KUH “PUA”), which seems to run behind in terms of overall internationalization and are yet to establish their offices specifically aimed at dealing with realization of academic mobility.

3. Consideration of selection process

The selection process for students and staff participating in mobility runs is an integral part of academic mobility. As stated in the Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility Handbook for Higher Education Institutions (Version 1.0, February 2017), the selection of students must be fair, transparent, coherent and documented and shall be made available to all parties involved in the selection process. The HEI shall take the necessary measures to prevent any conflict of interest with regard to persons who may be invited to take part in the selection bodies or process of students' selection. The selection criteria (e.g. the academic performance of the candidate, the previous mobility experiences, the motivation, etc.) shall be made public. For students from Partner Countries, the first criterion for selecting students will be academic merit, but with equivalent academic level, preference should be assigned to students from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds (including refugees, asylum seekers and migrants). Lower priority will be given to those who have already participated in mobility actions in the same study cycle under the LLP-Erasmus Programme, Erasmus Mundus Programme or Erasmus+ Programme. In the case of Erasmus Mundus Master Courses and Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, previous participation is only taken into account for scholarship holders. Once students are selected, they should receive from their sending institution the Erasmus+ Student Charter, setting out the student's rights and obligations with respect to her/his period of study abroad, and explaining the different steps to be undertaken before, during and after mobility. The sending and the receiving institution should have a common understanding regarding selection of participants and should have set a basic time-line for the nomination of mobile students and the acceptance of nominees. The selection of teachers and HEI staff shall be carried out by the HEI according to same principles aforementioned in the students section.

Our survey indicates that the processes of application for international mobility programmes have been fully automated only in 2 PC HEIs participating in the project (NaUKMA and UNS) with partial automation being implemented in UNI as well. The application in remaining 4 HEIs is being carried on in more traditional manners (presumably via email and/or hard copy submission of application documents), but should be automated in the near future in order to enable easier handling and more transparency in the process. This is particularly important taking into account that representatives of as many as 6 out of 7 HEIs have responded that their institutions have a well-developed selection procedure of incoming and outgoing students, teaching and administrative staff interested in international mobility programmes. Only a representative of MNAU did not provide any specific response to the question on quality of the selection procedure, possibly pointing to the existence or more or less significant flaws in the process.

The survey has further pointed to varying degrees of the on-line availability of information on the mobility related selection procedures, programmes of cooperation, course catalogues and student guides. Information on the selection procedures for participation in international mobility programmes is available on the university and/or faculty web sites in 5 out of 7 PC HEIs participating in MILETUS project (NaUKMA, EENU, UNS, SU, and UNI), and is not available only in PHEI KUH “PUA” and MNAU. The programmes of potential scientific and technical cooperation are generally available on the university and/or faculty web sites in all PC HEIs, fully in 5 of these (UNS, SU, PHEI KUH “PUA”, MNAU, and UNI) and partially in remaining 2 HEIs (NaUKMA and EENU). The availability of course catalogues on the university and/or faculty web sites looks less favorable, with full availability in 4 HEIs (EENU, SU, UNI, and MNAU) and partial availability in 2 HEIs (NaUKMA and UNS). The course



catalogue is not available on the university and/or faculty web sites only in PHEI KUH “PUA”. The guides for incoming and outgoing mobility students are not available on the university and/or faculty web sites in 2 HEIs (PHEI KUH “PUA” and MNAU), but are available fully in 4 HEIs (NaUKMA, UNS, SU, and UNI) and partially in the last remaining HEI (EENU).

Going further into the selection process, the activities of committees for selection of incoming and outgoing mobility candidates are considered as being transparent in as many as 6 out of 7 PC HEIs, and only the activities of selection committees in PHEI KUH “PUA” have been rated as not enough transparent. The unique lists of documents required for various programmes of international academic mobility have 4 HEIs (NaUKMA, SU, UNI and PHEI KUH “PUA”), 2 HEIs do not have these lists (EENU and MNAU), only UNS did not provide a specific reply, possibly suggesting that various mobility programmes may require different sets of documents.

Regarding the selection criteria, academic merit is normally taken as the most relevant one and was not questioned in this survey, but motivation and language proficiency were the subjects of the research. Evaluation of motivation letter (for students), that is evaluation of scientific/technical cooperation proposal (for staff), is an important element in ranking and selecting the mobility candidate in 6 out of 7 PC HEIs. The motivation and quality of the cooperation proposal are not of significant importance only for selection process in PHEI KUH “PUA”. The selection criteria include insistence on language proficiency of mobility candidates, either English or the native language in the host country, in all PC HEIs participating in MILETUS project, though 3 HEIs (EENU, UNI, and MNAU) do not follow this criterion very strictly.

4. Mobility monitoring

Our current survey has also tackled an important aspect of successful mobility flow that includes monitoring and recording of available mobility programmes and completed mobility runs, as well as the recording of mobility outcomes, such as recognition at home institutions, joint degree diplomas, etc. Five out of seven PC HEIs participating in the survey (NaUKMA, UNS, SU, PHEI KUH “PUA”, and MNAU) stated that they have unique databases containing information on previous, current and future international mobility programmes. EENU and UNI did not provide any specific response, neither positive nor negative, which suggests that these institutions might have more than one database and/or are additionally using some other means of keeping the information on their mobility programmes. These two HEIs did not provide specific response to the question on the existence of unique database containing the information on completed academic mobility runs as well, whereas MNAU has no any database on completed mobility runs and 4 HEIs (NaUKMA, UNS, SU, and PHEI KUH “PUA”) have the unique ones. The situation with keeping the records on mobility programmes and completed runs is therefore rather good, but looks definitely worse in the case of joint diplomas issued and/or joint doctoral theses, as only NaUKMA has a unique database to keep the information on these, 3 HEIs (SU, UNI, and MNAU) are using some other means of keeping this information, whereas the remaining 3 HEIs (EENU, UNS, and PHEI KUH “PUA”) do not have such databases at all. We can speculate, on the basis of the experiences at our own institution, that most of the PC HEIs participating in the survey have only occasionally been involved in international cooperation resulting in joint diplomas issued and/or joint doctoral theses, so they actually did not need to invest in developing the specific databases for the purpose of keeping the information on these.



Annex 1 - Research instrument: Questionnaire

General statements

1. Please provide the name of your higher education institution
2. Has your institution already adopted an internationalization strategy?
3. Has your institution already adopted an academic mobility strategy?
4. Has your institution already adopted a rule book on double mentoring and joint doctoral degree?
5. Are the agreements on international bilateral, scientific and technical cooperation available on the university and/or faculty web sites?
6. Does your institution have the specific office system dealing with realization of academic mobility?
7. Is the office system unitary (university based) or is decentralized (spread at faculties/departments)?
8. Please specify the number of office employees working on academic mobility.
9. Please specify the education structure of office employees (number of doctors, masters, bachelors and high school graduates) working on academic mobility.
10. Please rate the office performance so far.
11. Are the processes of application for international mobility programmes automated?
12. Does your institution have a well-developed selection procedure of incoming and outgoing students interested in international mobility programmes?
13. Does your institution have a well-developed selection procedure of incoming and outgoing teaching staff interested in international mobility programmes?
14. Does your institution have a well-developed selection procedure of incoming and outgoing administrative and technical staff interested in international mobility?
15. Are the selection procedures for participation in international mobility programmes available on the university and/or faculty web sites?
16. Are the programmes of potential scientific and technical cooperation available on the university and/or faculty web sites?
17. Are the course catalogues available on the university and/or faculty web sites?
18. Are the guides for incoming and outgoing mobility students available on the university and/or faculty web sites?
19. Are the activities of committees for selection of incoming and outgoing mobility candidates transparent?
20. Does your institution have the unique lists of documents required for various programmes of international academic mobility?
21. Is the evaluation of motivation letter (for students) or that of scientific/technical cooperation proposal (for staff) an important element in ranking and selecting the mobility candidates?
22. Does the selection criteria include insistence on language proficiency (either English or the native language in the host country) of mobility candidates?
23. Does your institution have a unique database containing information on previous, current and future international mobility programmes?



24. Does your institution have a unique database containing the information on completed academic mobilities?
25. Does your institution have a unique database containing the information on joint diplomas issued and/or joint doctoral theses?