



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



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Virtual Mobility New Concept for the New Era

Author: Ivana Filipović Malada



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



WELCOME TO THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION!

Students will be learning outside, armed with different devices, listening to a teacher of choice. Skills will not be assessed on paper but based on their performance in the field.

What on earth are we talking about?

Welcome to the future of education.

(Christiaan Henny)



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T MISS MOBILITY EXPERIENCE



- First, it's **fun and challenging new experience** that will enrich you as a person and a future professional
- It's a chance to gain **life-long international friends**, and these friendships & connections are likely to result in future joint projects and **international career opportunities**
- Because you **NEED** to try **more independence** in terms of choosing **what, when and how you want to learn** – tailor your own curriculum & schedule, and manage your own time
- Get familiar with **modern ICT learning platforms** and improve your **digital literacy**
- Try doing some **practical research & work** instead of just receiving the new info and studying in a classic way
- There's no better way to have a test run of a **real-life working environment** and prepare yourself for your future job: work in a multinational team on real-life joint projects, and...
- Try all of this in a foreign language – **improve your language skills!**

BECAUSE THERE'S NO OTHER WAY IN TODAY'S GLOBALIZED WORLD, MARKET & ECONOMY!



WHAT KINDS OF MOBILITY ARE THERE?

Now that we know that **mobility is an absolute must** in higher education nowadays, let's see what types of mobility are there:

- **Physical mobility:** the one where students in higher education use another institution outside their own country to study for a limited time period or, in other words – travel to study abroad, such as within the Erasmus+ Programme.
- **Virtual mobility:** “the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to obtain the same benefits as one would have with physical mobility but without the need to travel” (elearningeuropa.info portal).
Virtual mobility creates exchange opportunities for students who are unable to participate in traditional Erasmus+ Programme. It is **affordable for practically the whole student community** rather than the small minority presently able to benefit from a mobility grant!
- **Blended mobility:** the best of both – this concept combines both physical and virtual mobility. Blended mobility can support, complement and innovate both physical and virtual mobility. With blended mobility, virtual activities are combined with face-to-face experiences, such as class discussions, seminars and the physical presence of guest lecturers.



VIRTUAL MOBILITY – A STAR IS BORN!

One of the maybe most complete definitions of virtual mobility is the one saying that virtual mobility is a form of learning which consists of virtual components through a fully ICT-supported learning environment that includes cross-border collaboration with people from different backgrounds and cultures working and studying together, having, as its main purpose, the enhancement of intercultural understanding and the exchange of knowledge.

Its perhaps most valuable feature is that such *concept enables wide exchanges for all those not able to benefit from physical international exchange programs*, due to social, economic, organizational or other reasons.

It can also serve well to **prepare students for the physical mobility** later on, e.g. students get to have a test run and try how studying in a foreign language works for them or how they get along with peers of different nationalities.



In today's globalized labor market, one of the priorities is the necessity to work in virtual environments within multinational teams with different people from all around the globe whom you never met and, what is more, in a foreign language! What is likely to make a difference in choosing the right candidate for a job is whether or not they have the experience in situations alike. *Taking part in virtual and blended mobility programs can make a difference for you and improve your employability chances!*

VIRTUAL MOBILITY BENEFITS & WHAT THE NEW MOBILITY CONCEPT BROUGHT IN

- ***learning no longer depends on a location:*** learners are able to take courses wherever they are: at home, in the workplace, or while staying as an exchange student at a host university and taking a course from the home university or even a third one!
- ***disadvantaged students get equal learning opportunities***
- ***freedom of choice for students - choose yourself what, how and when to learn:*** instant access to experts/teachers from other institutions, courses, learning materials and resources
- ***direct access to top experts & access to high-quality research resources***
- ***practical preparation for new ways of working:*** the use of tools like videoconferencing and collaborative workspaces is a commonplace
- ***collaborative learning in all its glory:*** the *access to an international community of learners* linguistically and culturally diverse
- ***cross-cultural viewpoints & possibilities to discuss these viewpoints*** hopefully leading to *learning how to reach agreements and overcome obstacles*



*All students always want their education to be as practical as possible, right?
Well, with virtual mobility there is never too much practice
for a modern job seeker!*

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Project-based learning refers to working in a team (usually and preferably international, intercultural and interdisciplinary one) on a joint project.



This means that you don't learn by passively receiving information, but rather actively – by doing something practical and specific within a team, and while working on such projects, you reach conclusions and new knowledge yourself.

This is actually the basic concept and fundament of modern education!

Students need to organize roles, responsibilities and tasks within a team, come up with a detailed working plan and timeline, work together closely, etc., and collaborate with a mentor whose main role is to provide them with guidance. In that process they need to learn how to effectively communicate among each other, overcome potential problems and misunderstandings, learn to assess the work of others that affects them and their final mark as well. On top of all, they manage their own time with respect to load of work and deadlines.

All in all – unique practice of a real-life work situation and environment!

WHAT SKILLS DO I NEED TO JOIN VM?

While all students are welcome and encouraged to apply for virtual mobility programs, you should ask yourself where do you stand with the following ones and open yourself to further development and nurture of these:

- ✓ intercultural skills and attitudes
- ✓ networked learning
- ✓ active self-regulated learner skills
- ✓ autonomy-driven learning
- ✓ media and digital literacy
- ✓ open-mindedness



AND WHAT SKILLS CAN I EXPECT TO GAIN/IMPROVE?



- **Problem solving** in multicultural environments
- **Personal skills** such as self-organization (including time-management), motivation and initiative, critical thinking and creativity
- **Social skills** which allow students to interact effectively with others, both verbally and in written form
- **Leadership and teamwork skills** which enable students to work in a team
- **Emotional intelligence** which facilitates understanding of other people, different in terms of their nationality, culture, status and lifestyle
- **Drafting, planning and designing** of the detailed work plan, independent research and distribution of work among peers
- **Revising someone else's work** and providing opinions thereof



OK, BUT WHAT'S IN THERE REALLY FOR STUDENTS?

To sum up, besides the obvious academic gains, virtual mobility provides students with the opportunity to:

- **improve foreign language skills**
- **improve computer skills** – with special reference to those pertaining to online learning: getting better acquainted with modern online platforms and tools in education, using the Internet for collecting information and learning
- **network** with colleagues/peers internationally and across a variety of disciplines
- **make choices** regarding curriculum and schedule – students get to pick topics for their joint projects and organize their time & schedule accordingly

• • •



**More gains & benefits coming up!
There are so many of them, one slide can't
hold them all!**



OK, BUT WHAT'S IN THERE REALLY FOR STUDENTS? – PART 2

As promised, here comes more...

- **learn and work on real examples from the practice** and in real-life working situations and environments, instead of gaining merely theoretical knowledge which makes the main part of university studies
- acquire and practice in real-life situations valuable **soft skills** even before entering the labor market – skills that are increasingly and very highly valued by employers nowadays
- gain **global competence** – an added value of virtual mobility courses and extremely valued quality of today's job applicants around the globe



SOFT SKILLS – A FEW WORDS ABOUT THEM

16 core skills were identified as the ones needed in the 21st century. These essential skills are a combination of cognitive skills (dominated by STEM skills: science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and **soft skills**.

Soft skills refer to a combination of communication skills, social skills, personal skills, social intelligence, emotional intelligence, etc. or, in simple words, they include team spirit, self-confidence, assertiveness, inquisitiveness, trustworthiness, empathy, creativity, etc.

As it turns out, according to recent studies, employers more and more often report a lack of soft skills as a reason for not hiring job candidates!

Some of the really important ones for making a good impression on your potential employer are: having the right attitude, flexibility, oral communication skills, written communication skills, being self-critical, knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses, conflict management and knowing when to listen and when to speak.



AND WHAT ABOUT RECOGNITION?

At this moment, unfortunately, there are no virtual mobility programs in Serbia that are regulated in such a way for student participants to be granted ECTS credits.

But wait! There is



There are active projects and initiatives working on this issue and hopefully, necessary structural changes are soon to be made for mobility programs to be properly regulated and recognized. The change is on its way!

*Nevertheless, don't forget that credits mustn't be the only motive for choosing a mobility program to embark on!
Think about all the gains! After all, it's the future of education and rest assured it's coming!
Be among the first to seize the opportunity!*

Thank you for your attention!



For more information on virtual mobility, please refer to the additional material that we'll be sending via email!



Erasmus+

The MILETUS project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This presentation reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.