



NEWSLETTER



REALITY CHECK – LET'S SEE HOW MUCH WE'VE LEARNT FROM THE FIRST ONE: SECOND VIRTUAL MOBILITY RUN – SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

Several months after the 'test run', the first virtual mobility which took place in June 2018, we had a chance to summarize all the results, experience and feedback from it, to learn our lessons and build on them in order to design and implement new and improved version – the second virtual mobility run within the MILETUS project. Our mission and final goal was to further promote this new and groundbreaking mobility concept among the student community and to define the optimal format of virtual mobility based on real-life experience, best practices and feedback from the very target group – student participants.

Call for applications was open for the same group of students – master students, and third- and fourth-year bachelor students from our Ukrainian and Serbian partner universities. What was different, however, was that this time Serbian and Ukrainian teachers had a chance to apply in practice what they acquired during the first virtual mobility run when teaching staff from EU partner universities acted as student supervisors and shared their knowledge and expertise with their Serbian and Ukrainian colleagues. So this time teachers were also taking the exam – of trying themselves as student supervisors in this new teaching/learning model!

Forty-four best applicants were selected to participate in the two-month-long virtual mobility which took place from October 15 until December 15, 2018. In the selection process, we were aiming to include more students who couldn't participate in real mobility programs, so higher priority was given to students from less-advantaged backgrounds, such as students with physical, mental or health-related conditions, working students, etc., and seven of our participants belonged to some of these groups. What's also interesting to mention is that even one-fourth out of the overall number of student participants was coming from the International Relations study field. The rest of the applicants were coming from diverse fields such as Information technology, Marketing, Languages, Psychology, etc.



All students were then divided into groups of four. To spice things up and provide our participants with the best international experience possible, we took care for all teams to be international, interinstitutional and interdisciplinary.

Following the same model as in the first one (after all it was a success!), the second virtual mobility was designed as project-based learning where students gain knowledge and skills by working on joint projects. Again, we did our best to offer students some interesting and innovative topics for joint projects, such as Ethics in Advertising and Multicultural Work Teams – the ones that were chosen by the greatest number of participants. Among popular topics were also Protection of Personal Data for Users of Loyalty Programs, National Cultural Peculiarities in the Development of Innovative Goods, Research Planning and the one dealing with the problem of youth unemployment.

When it comes to structure, content and implementation of this particular mobility run, we didn't make many changes compared to the first one. Supporting video courses were divided in two thematic parts. The first part included the course of internationalization that was again meant to prepare students to work in multinational teams, improve their English language skills, and develop soft skills, thereby helping them to conquer social and cultural barriers. The following one comprised research methodology course that served to introduce relevant tools of research process such as research design, research project drafting, scientific writing, etc. All supporting learning materials were provided on the Moodle course website and were open for students' access at any time within the period of virtual mobility run. The main focus of the mobility program was, of course, work on the joint project, where students had a chance to work together in the virtual space with the necessary support and guidance of their supervisor. As for the efforts invested and workload expected, we could split them in two: individual learning activity with the expected duration of 15-25 hours for video courses and test, and joint project with 100 hours for joint project (13-14 pages) or 25 hours (3-4 pages) for individual contribution.

Upon successful completion of all the tasks within the second virtual mobility run (video courses, multiple-choice test and joint project) participants were granted certificates. We can say that we are pleased with their performance as even 18 students completed the program with the highest grade – excellent!



TRADITIONAL VS. INNOVATIVE – WHY NOT TAKE THE BEST OF BOTH? PERFECT BLEND OF REAL AND VIRTUAL MOBILITY CONCEPTS: BLENDED MOBILITY FOR PHD STUDENTS

MILETUS team definitely did not waste time in the final project year! Simultaneously with the implementation of the second virtual mobility run, we launched the call for applications for the blended mobility, third and final mobility run during the course of the project. Unlike the first two calls that were aimed at master and bachelor students, this call was open for PhD students from Serbian and Ukrainian partner universities.



The main objective of this particular program was to enhance the quality of research and to develop transferable skills through interdisciplinary project-based work. As the name itself reveals, 'blended' mobility was designed as a blend, or mix of the two mobility concepts – real and virtual mobility. We tried to combine the best of both: to provide PhD students with an opportunity to access research materials and resources of host universities, as well as to collaborate closely with research fellows and professors, both in the virtual space and face-to-face.

The idea behind this concept was also to encourage cross-border networking among young professionals, and the specific result that we were going for was publication of a joint article (based on the joint project work) in scientific journal or its presentation at a conference. We like to believe that this mobility experience served to our participants only as a starting point in creating tighter bonds and collaborations with their international peers!

Applicants were offered a variety of research areas, together with the possibility to get familiar with host institutions where the research in particular area was to be done, as well as to read a relevant biography of a corresponding expert mentor. Research areas offered were very different: from

Business and Management to Public Health, Mathematics, Sociology, Information Technologies, Logistics, Transportation, Internationalization, English Language and Literature, Electrical Engineering, Conflict Management and many more. What is more, PhD students were given a chance to even choose a research area that wasn't on the list.

After a two-level selection process and an interview, best candidates were chosen to participate. They were then divided into groups, based on their research area, and they were assigned mentors. Blended mobility lasted for five and a half months, from January until June 2019, and comprised three phases.



The first, preliminary phase of the program, organized on the basis of a virtual mobility concept, served as a starting point for the participants to get to know their international team members and mentors, to define topics of their joint work, project goals and results, and to distribute responsibilities. Main focus of this phase was preparation of the literature review, method development, questionnaires etc., and its duration was one and a half months (January - February 2019).



Second, real phase of the blended mobility run took place over a two-month period, in March and April 2019. It provided PhD students with an opportunity to travel to host universities (free of any expenses!) for the purpose of active cooperation with research fellows and professors of the host faculty in terms of exchanging experience, access to research materials and resources, and conducting research activities. During the real phase of the blended mobility, participants stayed at Hamburg University of Technology (Germany), Politecnico di Milano (Italy), Aalborg University (Denmark), University of Niš (Serbia), University of Novi Sad (Serbia), National University of Kyiv – Mohyla Academy (Ukraine) and People's Ukrainian Academy (Ukraine). A total of fifteen PhD students completed this phase of the program.

Third and final phase, conducted also in the virtual space, comprised evaluation of the results and finalization of the joint paper, as well as the discussion on possible future collaborations. Duration of the third phase of the mobility program for PhD students was 2 months – May and June 2019.



OVERVIEW OF THE THIRD-YEAR ACTIVITIES GIVEN THROUGH MAIN PROJECT EVENTS

Conference on cooperation among HEIs and ministries in the field of mobility

This two-day event organized in the form of a working conference on cooperation between partner universities and ministries in the field of mobility, with a special focus on virtual and blended mobility programs, was held in February 2019. Host of the event was the Department of Materials and Production of the Aalborg University, Denmark.

First day of the conference served for the partners to discuss and share experience regarding the implementation and results of the second virtual mobility run. Focal points of the discussion included results of the evaluation of students' learning performance, supervision and peculiarities of interaction with students' groups, and the results of the survey on second virtual mobility run. Furthermore, round table discussion with the Ministries on the perspectives for virtual/blended mobility programs in Serbia and Ukraine took place. As MILETUS is a project striving to introduce structural changes in the field of students' mobility, such an open discussion with the representatives of the Ministries was of a particular importance. The assessment of methodological framework developed for the virtual/blended mobility programs was also presented. Finally, the nature of the final methodological document and its dissemination opportunities were discussed between the project partners and Ministries, followed by a discussion on upgrading the International Relation Offices at partner universities.

The second day was completely focused on the methodology adopted for the MILETUS mobility programs: problem-based learning (PBL). The principles of the PBL approach and the

interdisciplinarity of the research problem were presented, followed by a demonstration of the innovative “Smart Production Lab” as a result of the PBL approach.

Highlights

We are always open to external cooperation, especially when it comes to the improvement of virtual and blended mobility formats! That's why we established cooperation with another Erasmus+ project, Open Virtual Mobility, to share relevant experience, knowledge and good practices.

Training: Problem-based learning (PBL) approaches across study programs

This two-day training was again hosted by our Danish partners, Aalborg University (Copenhagen Campus), and it served as a wonderful opportunity for the partners to benefit from the vast expertise of our hosts in the field of problem-based learning and its practical applications.

The training was structured around the following topics: how to organize and structure education with PBL as a learning platform, critical thinking within PBL and transformation of study program to PBL, PBL platform for mobility learning, how to structure the learning platform for virtual/blended mobility to improve students' problem solving, creativity, critical thinking, collaborative learning and innovation in culturally diverse groups.

The training also included workshops where participants had a chance to exercise new skills and work within a team on interesting assignments. A real value added for the teaching staff!

First round table discussion on mobility perspectives for researchers

As a part of the MILETUS blended mobility run for PhD students, the project conference took place in the run-up to the First round table discussion at which PhD students had the opportunity to exchange their experiences and impressions regarding blended mobility. Each of them presented the topic they were working on, the experience and practices they gained during the mobility, both in real and virtual phases of it. Presentations served as an introduction to a discussion on various research approaches at different universities, combined with the internationalization aspects of our participants' mobility experience.

In addition to PhD students who took part in the MILETUS blended mobility program, First round table discussion on mobility perspectives for researchers was aimed at PhD students from other Ukrainian universities interested in the academic mobility, who also attended the event. Some of the main topics included organizational aspects, supervision practices and experiences, and suggestions for future mobility runs. Conclusions of this round table were summarized and served as a valuable input for shaping the final version of methodological recommendations for MILETUS virtual and blended mobility programs. The issue of upgrading International Relation Offices and Students' Mobility Offices at partner universities was also tackled in the meeting.

Following the round table, a workshop on Improvement of the Blended Mobility Model took place. After all, when you're striving to make things perfects, the work's never done! Topics such as Organizational and Communication Components, Content Component, Administration and Networking Components of the Blended Mobility Model were covered and final recommendations were aggregated and included in the final project publication. Don't forget to read it on our website!

Second round table discussion on mobility perspectives for researchers

Project meeting, hosted by the University of Niš, Serbia, was primarily focused on the elaboration of recommendations for blended mobility, as well as verification of the blended mobility model.

In addition to the second round table discussion, attended also by Serbian universities not involved in the project itself but interested in the topic, a series of workshops on very important and up-to-date issues was a central part of this conference. Concept of Science with a Mission was one among many hot topics that were covered. New social contract, the triangle between citizens, science and government was addressed within the framework of Horizon Europe, the future EU research and innovation program.

Ethics in Research - Dilemma Game, organized as a simulation of the group work, served to help in improving participants' communication skills, problem-solving skills and supervision of the group.

Furthermore, the workshop entitled Dimensions of Open Science: From Open Data to Social Science offered participants a presentation on the concept of Open Science, representing a new approach to the scientific process. Finally, Handling the Brain Drain was the last one. This topic somehow seemed appropriate, given that PhD students who took part in blended mobility gained their own experience in working at another university and were able compare living and working conditions between different countries.

In addition to workshops, the conference served for partners to finalize the evaluation of recommendations for the blended mobility model, as well as the assessment of the blended mobility.



Final Project meeting & Sustainability workshop

The two final project events took place in Belgrade (hosted by Singidunum University) and Milan (hosted by Politecnico di Milano), respectively.

Belgrade meeting served primarily to present altogether concluding remarks regarding the relevance of the project and its implementation, and to conclude some of the most important remaining issues such as its impact and structural dimension. External evaluation concerning the quality of the project implementation was also presented to partners and discussed. In the part dedicated to dissemination of the project results, among other points, the consortium agreed to develop a comprehensive information material on virtual mobility programs, based on all relevant data aggregated in the course of the project, and disseminate it to all relevant students' organizations and career development centers in Serbia and Ukraine. In this way, still lesser known concept of the virtual mobility is to be promoted among the students' community after the end of the project, which is the first step towards its mission and sustainability of project's results.

What started in Belgrade, was successfully finalized in Milan: a detailed sustainability plan was developed together with the timeline for its implementation. After all, we want the results of our work to last for long and to have far-reaching impact!

We would like to thank all partners and all participants involved in the project for their cooperation and valuable contribution to the project implementation.



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