



Strengthening of Internationalisation
Policies at Universities in Serbia



University of Novi Sad
Dr Zorana Đinđića 1
21000 Novi Sad, Serbia



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MINUTES

JOINT DEGREE WORKSHOP

How to develop, implement and manage Joint (Degree) Programme

Strengthening of Internationalisation Policies at Universities in Serbia (SIPUS)

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Venue:	University of Novi Sad, Rectorate Building, Conference Room (address: Dr Zorana Djindjica 1), Serbia
Time and date:	23 March 2015
Participants:	Ulrike Krawagna (UniGraz), Andries Verspeeten (UGent), Dr Andrea Schmidt (UP), Dr Gabriella VÖÖ (UP), Prof. Dr. Dalibor Soldatić (UB), Milja Bralović (UB), Jelena Jevremović (UB), Prof. Dr. Jovan Teokarević (UB), Gordana Ristić (UB), Nemanja Dragičević (UB), Marija Filipović Ožegović (UB), Olivera Mijatović (UNIKG), Prof. Dr. Dragan Antić (UNI), Prof. Dr. Zoran Nikolić (UNI), Prof. Dr. Ivan Milentijević (UNI), Prof. Dr. Miladin Kostić (SUNP), Prof. Dr. Verka Jovanović (SUB), Prof. Dr. Danijel Cvjetičanin (SUB), Katarina Vaščić (ESN), Ivana Vujkov (UNS), Helena Hiršenberger (UNS), Ana Šoti (UNS), Nataša Hrabovski (UNS), Jasmina Biro (UNS), Danijela Gračanin (UNS), Miroslav Pavlović (UNS), Kristina Ivšić (UNS), Aleksandra Smirnov-Brkić (UNS).

SIPUS PROJECT ACRONYMS: UniGraz (University of Graz, Austria), UGent (University of Ghent, Belgium), UP (University of Pécs, Hungary), UA (University of Alicante, Spain), WUS Austria, NCSTD (National Council of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia), NCHE (National Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Serbia), MEST (Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia), UB (University of Belgrade, Serbia), UNIKG (University of Kragujevac, Serbia), UNI (University of Niš, Serbia), SUNP (State University of Novi Pazar), SUB (Singidunum University, NIS (Petroleum Industry of Serbia), BINS (BalkanIDEA Novi Sad, Serbia), UNS (University of Novi Sad). **Other acronyms:** NTO (National Tempus Office, Serbia)

Welcome

On behalf of University of Novi Sad, Prof. Dr. Radovan Pejanović, Acting Rector, and Helena Hiršenberger, SIPUS Project Coordination Team, greeted the participants of the JOINT DEGREE Workshop organised within the SIPUS Project.



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Morning session

The morning session provided a general overview on important topics with regard to the development, implementation and running of a joint (degree) programme, practical inside views of already existing programmes at EU partner institutions, as well as a presentation on the current situation in Serbia when accreditation of joint programmes is concerned.

[All the details are available in the presentations given to SIPUS partners and placed on the SIPUS website.](#)

1. Ulrike Krawagna, University of Graz, Austria:

Introduction: Why Joint (Degree) Programmes? Initial Phase & Shaping the Academic and Administrative Legal Frame – Definitions & Terminology

Ulrike Krawagna, International Relations Office, University of Graz, provided the basic information related to joint degree programmes as well as their evolution at University of Graz, being in charge of their management:

- the joint degree definition
- the advantages/disadvantages of introducing joint degree programmes
- the structure of joint degree programmes
- joint degree programmes at University of Graz
- the joint degree programmes' challenges
- preconditions for successful implementation
- concrete examples of successfully implemented study programmes
- experiences in introducing joint degree programmes in Serbia
- joint degree student administration
- joint degree online application system.

Important remarks made during the presentation:

- Joint Degree Programme coordinator deals with the logistics, that is, the organisation of meetings etc. and all data referring to the study programme is kept centrally at the coordinating institution. In the study programmes implementation all relevant offices are involved (offices that usually deal with student administration, IROs...). Primarily at University of Graz, International Relations Office is currently in charge of this work, however, there is an internal reorganisation ongoing where certain task will be delegated to other offices as well;



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- the greatest difficulty they faced during the implementation of joint degree study programmes was the accreditation process in Serbia, since it lasts too long. Furthermore, there are still some legal problems in Serbia concerning issuing of a joint diploma, and the communication with some of the partners in the region was rather problematic (some of them dropped out although they had signed the partnership agreement).

2. Andries Verspeeten, University of Ghent, Belgium:

Developing and running of Joint (Degree) Programmes in the EM context – Ghent University's approach

Mr. Andries Verspeeten, International Relations Office, University of Ghent, gave a short presentation on University of Ghent in terms of BA and MA study programmes taught in English, joint degree programmes within ERASMUS MUNDUS implemented at Ghent University and a number of international students studying at their university. He gave an overview on the following aspects:

- rationale for setting up joint degree programmes
- what kind of impact this had on the university
- their definition of joint programmes and their complementarity with mobility schemes
- development of mobility schemes
- administrative structures supporting joint programmes' management
- the impact of joint study programmes on employability
- sustainability of joint study programmes
- conclusions drawn from previous experiences within ERASMUS MUNDUS programme.

Important remarks made during the presentation:

- Ghent University is preparing a guide for joint programmes' development
- academic and non-academic staff need to work closely
- the coordinating institution receives 15.000 EUR lump sum for coordination activities, which is sometimes enough for employing a full-time person to manage joint programmes
- teaching staff cannot be funded additionally for these courses, since most of them are actually local programmes included into joint programmes (for which they already get a salary).

3. Dr. Andrea Schmidt, University of Pécs, Hungary

Dr. Gabriella Vöö, University of Pécs, Hungary:



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Developing and running of Joint (Degree) Programmes – practical examples from Hungary

Dr. Andrea Schmidt, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pécs, presented the joint Master study programme in International Relations ongoing at this university which implementation was financed by Visegrad fund. They have received 200.000 EUR for all three years of its implementation and right now the first generation of students are preparing their master thesis. She also gave a short overview of the consortium partners and the very development of the study programme, as well as the problems they faced during this process.

Her presentation was followed by the presentation of Dr. Gabriella Vöö, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pécs, who presented the experiences gained through the implementation of joint MA in English and American Literature which is co-coordinated with University of Graz.

Important remarks made during the presentation:

- the problem of legislation is still not resolved (issuing of joint degree diplomas, registration of the study programme, etc).

4. Prof. Dr. Dalibor Soldatić, University of Belgrade, Serbia:

Current situation in Serbia: Legal framework, national and local structures and procedures – good practices and challenges

Prof. Soldatić emphasized three issues regarding introduction of joint programmes at Serbian universities:

- lack of state/university strategy
- the most successful joint programmes are established between two universities. Multiplication of consortium multiplies problems too
- lack of definition of joint degrees/programmes by EU countries
- accreditation issues – should joint programmes be accredited in both countries involved or only in one?
- joint diploma – in Serbia two diplomas are issues instead of one
- how to regulate some other standards? In Serbia there is no possibility of engaging teachers without PhD degree, while in EU there is no such standard
- in Serbia the education system applied is 4+1+3 in comparison to EU (3+2+3)
- credit assignment should be harmonized (EU and non-EU practice)



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- mobility applies only to agreements between universities. In case student participates in the mobility individually, he will lose his status, which means no possibility for individual initiatives
- what level do we prefer for joint programmes? UBG prefers MA and PhD.

Important remarks made during the presentation:

- Law on Higher Education in Serbia includes only one article (no. 26) dedicated to joint studies.
- He also emphasized that every diploma has to have its English version as well.

5. Prof. Dr. Ivan Milentijević, Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance, Serbia:

Accreditation of Joint Programmes

At the very beginning of his presentation, prof. Milentijević pointed out that Serbia, that is Commission for Accreditation does not have so much experience with joint programmes, but still they have some. There is a high diversity in joint programmes in general, thus he provided information on the following:

- general info on joint programmes (structure, participants, practices...)
- general info on joint degrees
- recommendations on how joint study programmes should be created (ENQA standards to be applied)
- specific set of criteria for joint programmes' accreditation should be created
- principles of designing European accreditation approach for Joint programmes
- criteria for evaluation of joint master's programmes
- system of Quality Assurance in Serbia
- the Accreditation Procedure
- standards for accreditation of the study programs of I and II level of studies.

Important remarks made during the presentation:

- ENQA is aware of all problems referring to accreditation of joint programmes. Therefore they proposed to ministries that ENQA principles to be the basis for joint programmes accreditation.

After all presentations, the discussion was initiated Gordana Ristić, UBG, who has also been the administrator of one interdisciplinary joint programme at University of Belgrade, therefore shared her first-hand experience regarding the accreditation of this study programme. After the programme was accredited, the programme coordinator and participants wanted to improve the content of the programme, therefore they have entered into the process of re-accreditation which has lasted for 1,5 years already and has not been completed yet.



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Another problem they faced was issuing diploma. Up to this moment, University of Belgrade neither has issued any diploma due to the current bylaws, nor it initiated creation of amendments to these bylaws. Thus she concluded there is no institutional support for joint programmes.

Kristina Ivšić, Faculty of Philosophy, UNS, asked the representative of the Commission whether it is enough if ENQA accredits a studz programme or this very same programme should be accredited nationally as well? Prof. Milentijević answered that, in case the study programme has been accredited by one of the national agencies which is the ENQA member, there is no need it to be accredited nationally as well.

Andries Verspeeten draw the attention to a new document for joint programmes endorsed by EU Commission and published on their website created with the purpose to harmonize these standards/procedures, which could serve as a common ground when creating standards for joint programme accreditation.

Afternoon session

Ulrike Krawagna, UniGraz, suggested the afternoon session to be continued in an open discussion and to collect questions and good examples that could be the starting point for further discussion and dialogue with policy makers.

Ivana Vujkov, UNS, pointed out that Serbian universities have the opportunity to participate in new ERASMUS + programme and the idea of SIPUS project is to facilitate this participation as mucg as possible and help to overcome the previous obstackles when implementation of mobility programmes and international projects are concerned.

Marija Filipović Ožegović recommended some previous joint programme coordinators to be consulted, such as the one of ASTROMUNDUS of UBG, when preparing standards and recommendations for joint programmes' accreditation. She also expressed her hope that in 2016 Serbian HEIs will be able to apply for ERASMUS Charter, while in 2017 Serbia could become a full member of ERASMUS + programme.

Ulrike Krawagna expressed her doubt the introducing joint degree programmes is the best option for Serbian universities, since funding these programmes mainly comes from scholarships (from international students) and these fees are pretty high, so the local students cannot afford it. On the comment of prof. Soldatić that the only benefit for universities when ERASMUS + is concerned is to send out students, since the budget is quite limited, Ulrike answered there is some money within ERASMUS +programme for



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coordination activities, however ERASMUS MUNDUS have been more time-consuming than joint degree programmes are.

Andries Verspeeten pointed out that the whole set-up of the previous ERASMUS MUNDUS programme was a huge incentive to give high scholarships. Once EU stops funding it, it will be very difficult to enrol students.

Prof. Soldatić raised the question of brain-drain and the possibility of setting some limitations and mechanisms to prevent it, onto which Ulrike Krawagna answered that it is a part of the country emigration/immigration policy (student visas, residence permits...) and these are the only mechanisms right now that could serve this purpose. Andries Verspeeten suggested the double degree programmes to be one of the mechanisms where students are in the position to stay in touch with their home universities.

Ivana Vujkov asked to the Commission for Accreditation if it is possible to set up different deadlines for joint degree programmes and national programmes, so as to make the accreditation of these programmes more efficient. Prof. dr Danijel Cvjetičanin responded that this is not possible, since the Commission does not prioritise joint programmes over the national ones, that is all study programmes are equally important.

On several questions regarding the structure and financial issues of joint programmes coordination, Ulrike Krawagna answered the following:

- within ERASMUS + tuition fee is included into participation fee, which, again, includes also travel costs, insurance etc. The amount of tuition fee depends on the national legislation (national fee).
- At Uni Graz, 2 people are engaged for running joint programmes and are paid by the University, but his was a strategic decision.
- The initiative/content comes from academics, on the other hand all the technicalities are done by administrative staff, therefore their collaboration has to be efficient.
- She suggested that SIPUS project could initiate a round table where all the representatives of current joint programmes in Serbia would present their experiences and obstacles they came across, which might help when creating the recommendations for JP's accreditation.

END OF THE WORKSHOP

Minutes written by:

Ana Šoti, UNS

30 March 2015