European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development

Universities

Internationalisation and mobility have become cornerstones of the universities’ strategic considerations (for more information, cf. University Report 2017 [1]). Here internationalisation as an interdisciplinary theme concerns not only the core tasks of teaching and research but also all areas of organisation, management and administration. Questions of internationalisation and its implementation are also key components in the performance agreements of Austrian universities with the Federal Government.

Many universities have therefore already developed internationalisation strategies and started to take measures to increase student and staff mobility and create mobility-promoting framework conditions. These measures include, among others

- the extension of modularisation,
- the creation of “mobility windows” in the curricula and
- the establishment of international joint study programmes (joint degree or double degree programmes).

Modularisation and “mobility windows”

At some universities, modularisation, i.e. the grouping of individual teaching contents into clear, predefined study units, has already been included in the guidelines on drawing up curricula or implemented in revised curricula. Modularisation aims to promote the inner- and inter-university mobility of students as they can complete a module or module component at other faculties and universities.

Another structural prerequisite for further extending the scope of mobility is so-called “mobility windows” in the curricula, which aim to provide sufficient scope for spending semesters abroad. Many universities have already set up such mobility windows. In addition, universities are increasingly making efforts to enable a flexible and tolerant transfer of study credits acquired abroad. A strategic focus to enhance student mobility at many universities is their increasing participation in the EU programme Erasmus+ and other mobility programmes, as well as the expansion of student exchange with partner universities.

International and foreign language study programmes

International study programmes, in which a part of the study is completed at one or several
foreign partner universities, make an active contribution to the internationalisation of teaching and research and foster academic educational exchange. These international study programmes also include the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees, in which at least three higher education establishments from three different programme countries are involved in the form of a consortium. Since 2014 the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees have been continued under the ERASMUS+ programme, targeted at master’s courses. The area of doctorates was integrated in the Marie Skłodowska Curie programme.

In 2015, 88 international joint or double degree programmes were set up at thirteen Austrian universities.

In addition, the universities are continually expanding their range of programmes in English or another language. According to the intellectual capital reports of the universities, there were 145 foreign-language degree programmes in 2015, the majority of which were master’s (77%) and doctoral programmes (19%).

**Measures at the staff level**

As part of an enhancement of mobility, a number of universities have created specific positions, such as a “coordinator for international relations” at the faculties of the Vienna University of Technology, or the “mobility promoter” at the University of Salzburg.

**Language centres**

Insufficient language skills often hamper mobility plans. The universities have attempted to counteract them by having established language centres. Located in larger universities, language centres provide a wide range of language learning options for students and university staff, but also for the interested public.

**Universities of applied sciences**

In the current University of Applied Sciences Development and Financing Plan, the providers of university of applied sciences programmes are required to continue to develop their existing internationalisation strategies up to the academic year 2017/2018. The focus here is on the following measures in particular:

- **Curriculum design** which enables long-term studies abroad for which credits can be granted (“mobility windows”)
- **Measures to increase quality** in the preparation, monitoring and follow-up of studies abroad
- Fair and transparent recognition of knowledge, qualifications, etc. obtained abroad
- “**Internationalisation at home**” for non-mobile students (e.g. by expanding foreign-language education programmes).

**University colleges of teacher education**

Bachelor or master courses at university colleges of teacher education can also be offered and run as joint study programmes. For the master courses in teacher education for teachers at general education schools at secondary level offered in the future at university colleges of teacher education, compulsory cooperation with one or more foreign higher education establishments in the form of a jointly set up study programme is required by law [More] [2].
Partnerships and Networks

At universities there is a wealth of initiatives, schemes, projects and networks which open up mobility options to students and university staff. Relevant examples can be found in chapter 13.2 [3] and chapter 13.7 [4].

At this point the Erasmus+ project options which have not been addressed so far must also be mentioned:

**Capacity Building in Higher Education** [5] is based on the previous programmes Tempus, Alfa and Edulink. As part of this programme element, cooperation projects are promoted which are based on multilateral partnerships. They are divided into two categories:

- **Joint Projects** aim to promote the modernisation of higher education establishments, for example by developing new curricula or improving existing ones, improving the governance and management systems, etc.
- **Structural Projects** are active at the level of national higher education systems and the developments in higher education policy in the partner countries.

Austria – like in the predecessor programme TEMPUS – takes part very successfully in this project element.

**Knowledge Alliances** are transnational and results-oriented cooperation projects between higher education establishments and companies which aim to create innovative new learning and teaching methods and promote interdisciplinarity and the exchange of new ideas. Here, too, Austrian higher education establishments have been able to successfully assert themselves throughout Europe.

**Strategic Partnerships** are a way of promoting different projects in the field of education, e.g. exchange of best practices, development and implementation of innovative methods and curricula, intensified use of recognition and transparency instruments. These projects aim to promote cooperation between higher education establishments and also cross-sectoral collaboration.

Particular attention is paid to the Austrian incentive funding “Austria Mundus+”, which guarantees ideal entry into the programme for Austrian higher education establishments in order to get as much as possible out of the EU in return. Higher education establishments are supported in the preparation and development of project applications.

**Scientific and Technological Cooperation (S&T Cooperation)** is based on interstate arrangements and bilateral agreements regarding cooperation projects in the area of science and technology. Research periods abroad as part of specific scientific cooperation projects with researchers from an S&T Cooperation partner country are supported by this scheme. Bilateral S&T Cooperation agreements/arrangements currently exist with the following countries:

- Albania,
- Argentina,
- Bulgaria,
- China,
- France,
- India,
- Korea (Republic of Korea, South Korea),
- Croatia,
- Macedonia,
Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Czech Republic, Hungary and Vietnam.

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