

ТЕОРІЯ І ПРАКТИКА ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ

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THE IMPACT OF THE ERASMUS+ PROGRAMME ON THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

Globalization processes, affecting all spheres of modern social, economic, political, cultural life of people, have significant impact on national higher education systems around the world, thereby transforming these inherently rigid systems, primarily by enhancing *international component* of their functioning. This process of placing considerable emphases on international component of higher education systems on all levels (primarily, on national and institutional levels) has been entitled *internationalization of higher education*. Our earlier works have already emphasized that this term has so-called «umbrella nature» and may cover many areas and activities related to international cooperation between countries and higher education institutions (Myhovych, 2018). International cooperation has gradually acquired the status of the main indicator for the process of reforming of national higher education systems of the world.

For Ukraine transformation of its national higher education system is an extremely important task for society and the state. The main objective of the reform is to ensure systemic educational transformation with the aim that Ukrainian citizens have access to quality education at all levels. Coming back to the idea that international cooperation is currently considered to be the marker of quality in the realm of higher education, we underline the fact that the process of internationalization of Ukrainian higher education system could be a driving force for its transformation. It should be noted that in the realities of Ukrainian higher education system internationalization process is considered to be mainly as the indicator and trigger for the enhancement of international component of work of Ukrainian universities through academic exchange programmes (academic mobility of students and teachers), implementation of ECTS, simplification of the procedure for recognition of diplomas, development of international cooperation and especially development of programmes for teaching foreign students.

Among the exchange programmes aimed at the enhancement of academic mobility process in Ukrainian higher education institutions one of the leading ones is ERASMUS+ programme financially and administratively supported by the European Union (ERASMUS+ official website, 2020). The introduction of the programme allowed for the replacement of seven programmes bringing together *Lifelong Learning Programme* (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Jean Monnet and Grundtvig); *Youth in Action programme*; five international cooperation programmes (*Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink*, the programme for cooperation with industrialized countries, and the new sport action).

ERASMUS+ programme provides grants for a wide range of actions and activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport. The programme gives opportunities to students, trainees, staff and volunteers to spend a period abroad to increase their skills and employability. It supports organizations to work in transnational partnership and to share innovative practices in the fields of education, training and youth. The new sport action will support grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism.

The actions of the ERASMUS+ programme are divided into decentralized and centralized ones. The decentralized actions are managed in each programme country by National Agencies that are appointed by their national authorities. The centralized actions are managed at a European level by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) located in Brussels. The programme aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernizing education, training, and youth work. The programme supports transnational partnerships among education, training, and youth institutions and organizations to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps we are facing in Europe. It also supports national efforts to modernize education, training, and youth systems. In the field of sport, there will be support for grassroots projects and cross-border challenges such as combating match-fixing, doping, violence and racism.

The *objective of the present study* is to evaluate the effects of the ERASMUS+ programme (an acronym for European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) on the internationalisation of higher education in Ukraine. ERASMUS+ provides mobility grants to students, academics and administrative staff, but it also supports other activities to enhance the European dimension in studies, such as intensive programmes, development of curricula or thematic networks. It is open to all types of higher education institutions and addresses all disciplines and levels of study up to and including the doctorate level. The activities financed by ERASMUS+ are expected to have positive effects on the internationalisation strategies and practices of higher education institutions and thus contribute to a higher quality of teaching and learning, research and other support activities. The programme requires the participating higher education institutions to have

signed a European charter, by which the institutions commit to meet certain conditions regarding the exchanges taking place within the programme, including waiving tuition fees for incoming students. They also commit to recognize study credits from abroad in accordance with learning and training agreements signed by the sending and host institutions and the students. The expectation is that Erasmus creates added value to the modernization of higher education institutions by way of lasting effects on their internationalisation.

Ukraine joined the programme at the end of the 20th century at the time when it has already been successfully running in Europe for more than a decade. Since then, ERASMUS+ has become a widely recognizable programme in Ukrainian higher education and in the wider public. Through their websites, higher education institutions prominently advertise their participation in ERASMUS+ projects as part of international cooperation activities. There has been significant increased funding earmarked for the Programme. Furthermore, over the years we have witnessed a steady increase in student and staff participation in exchanges and other activities financed through ERASMUS+ programme.

The existing studies of ERASMUS+ in Ukraine conducted at the participating institutions tend to focus on the questions of exchange experience of ERASMUS+ students and the quality of institutional support for exchanges. The question that has not yet been explored is how participation in ERASMUS+ affects the higher education institutions and indeed contributes to their further internationalisation and modernization. Internationalisation is, in this context, understood as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education (Knight, 2008). As such it refers to various activities, such as extending the network of international cooperation partners and deepening of cooperation, developing internationalized curricula and offering courses in foreign languages, participating in international research projects, etc. It is crucial that the international dimension occurs both in institutional goals and practices and that it reaches all actors in the higher education context.

The European Commission is also concerned with the question of how wide-ranging and long-lasting the effects are that its flagship education and training programme has on the internationalisation of higher education in Europe. Since its launch in 1987, ERASMUS+ programme has always held among its objectives the improvement international cooperation between higher education institutions in order to enhance the quality of the institutions. Indeed, ERASMUS+ has been built on the assumption that internationalisation can contribute to a higher quality of higher education. Thus, ERASMUS+, as the EU's foremost policy instrument, is assumed to have direct positive effects towards this goal. In its communication of 2013, «European higher education in the world», the European Commission clearly states that it does not consider internationalisation simply as a matter of increased mobility.

Strong emphasis is placed on requiring higher education institutions to develop more international curricula, promote language skills, and expand

digital learning opportunities. In other words, the Commission expects that ERASMUS+ has acted as a driver for the modernization of higher education in Europe and now also seeks to evaluate if and how this was accomplished. Drawing from the Commission's communication on internationalisation and from the objectives of ERASMUS+ programme, there are three areas where the direct effects of the programme are particularly expected: *international student and staff mobility; the internationalisation of study at home; strategic partnerships and institutional support services for international cooperation.*

The findings of this study confirm that the ERASMUS+ Programme has contributed to strengthening certain aspects of internationalisation, but also that the internationalisation of higher education at home is still not fully developed. The most visible impact of the programme is of course the increase in student and staff mobility, since ERASMUS+ is the only mobility scheme for which there is mass interest. However, the share of those participating in the programme from the entire student body, academic and professional staff remains low. ERASMUS+ has contributed to institutions extending their networks and strengthening the capacity of international offices. The Programme also has a strong symbolic meaning, and it is recognized in higher education circles and in the public at large as a 'brand name' of international cooperation. Institutions prominently display their ERASMUS+ participation on their websites.

Much less visible are the direct effects of the programme on the internationalisation of study at home and thus on the quality of teaching and learning. We have investigated course offerings and study programmes in foreign languages, internationalisation of curricula, involvement of foreign lecturers and integration of foreign students with Ukrainian students. We found that these aspects are still rather weak at most institutions. The usage of foreign literature is the only aspect of internationalisation of study at home that is mentioned frequently, other forms much less. The differences between institutions – also within the same university – are notable. At the institutions which practice the internationalisation of study at home we can establish a clear link to the support from the Erasmus Programme. However, participation in ERASMUS+ alone does not automatically result in the internationalisation of study at home or contribute to quality teaching and learning. In other words, participation in Erasmus does not necessarily initiate practices of the internationalisation of study at home, but Erasmus can serve as an important source supporting the implementation of such practices if and when an institution decides to do so.

The programme is best utilized in the institutions which have a clear internationalisation strategy and are ambitious in their international orientation. Most frequently these are the institutions that also seek to attract foreign students for full-time enrolment in their (most often postgraduate) study programmes. At such institutions international cooperation permeates all operations and activities. The internationalisation of study at home through courses or study programmes in foreign languages is an intrinsic part of this

strategy. Such institutions also have strong support services for international cooperation by creating well-staffed international offices. Taking full advantage of the opportunities offered through the ERASMUS Programmes comes naturally, since this is compatible with other measures and helps strengthen the international profile of the institution. However, in Ukraine such institutions are still an exception. In the majority of Ukrainian higher education institutions, participation in ERASMUS+ is an add-on activity, often overshadowed by higher prioritized international research cooperation. Consequently, the impact of the Erasmus Programme on institutional practices is rather weak.

We conclude that it is not ERASMUS+ that drives the internationalisation of Ukrainian higher education, but it is a strong internationalisation strategy (both national and especially institutional) that creates enabling conditions for the full utilization of Erasmus and its contribution to and impact on internationalisation. So what are our recommendations? We have developed 18 recommendations which address mostly institutional leadership, but also the Ukrainian government and institutions. Although these were prepared in and for the Ukrainian higher education context, we believe that most of them may be generalizable for other comparable countries, especially in Eastern Europe.

Recommendation 1: Institutions should consider adopting a ‘systematized’, or ideally a ‘hybrid systematized’, approach as opposed to an ‘individualized’ approach to the organization of study for incoming Erasmus students. Systematized and hybrid systematized approaches ensure that there is an institutional offer of courses or study programmes in foreign languages. Developing a systematized approach should/could be conducted within the strategic framework of the modernization of teaching and learning.

Recommendation 2: Continue to nurture and further develop individualized work with exchange students for training or thesis work and explore ways to make it sustainable if/when the number of students increases significantly.

Recommendation 3: Institutions should consider offering courses in foreign languages (including those offered in summer schools) as electives to national students or perhaps even making it mandatory to choose one or more of these electives in the course of study. They should explore ways to encourage national students to take advantage of these opportunities. Perhaps electives taken at foreign institutions could be recognized as part of the curricular requirements at home institutions.

Recommendation 4: Institutions need to create incentives for and provide support to academics to internationalize curricula and their practices of teaching and learning. Institutions need to develop a strategic plan for the internationalisation of teaching and learning and part of the modernization of teaching and learning.

Recommendation 5: Institutions should develop tutor systems and mentor support for incoming ERASMUS students. Similarly, there should be

mentor systems for outgoing domestic students to better prepare them academically for the exchange and follow-up after their return.

Recommendation 6: Across the EU teaching and learning of foreign languages has to remain a priority. Also in Ukraine, sufficient resources and support need to be given to this objective at all levels of the education system.

Recommendation 7: Higher education institutions in Ukraine should 'profile' their teaching and learning, including practical training offered to foreign students. They should select a group of courses or develop a course module or a study programme to be conducted in foreign languages for incoming Erasmus students, other foreign students, and for interested Ukrainian students. They could do this individually or in collaboration – a network or a consortium or partnership – with other institutions in Ukraine or abroad.

Recommendation 8: The internationalisation of teaching and learning has to be integrated into the European, national and institutional policies and strategies for the modernization of teaching and learning.

Recommendation 9: A bigger share of funding should be made available within the Erasmus Programme, earmarked specifically to support the development and implementation of international (joint and double) study programmes, international collaborative projects for advancement of teaching and learning, and institutional initiatives for developing internationalisation of study at home.

Recommendation 10: Institutions need to develop mechanisms through which outgoing ERASMUS students meet with academic staff or their academic advisers to prepare for the educational side of an Erasmus exchange. Academic staff and/or academic advisors should follow up with returning students to discuss possible ways to further develop the knowledge acquired by way of a thesis or other type of work. Home institutions should, thus, offer outgoing students mentorship assistance before and after the exchange.

Recommendation 11: To motivate professors to develop courses in foreign languages and/or individually work with ERASMUS students, institutions need to have explicit mechanisms of incentives through remuneration, workload and criteria for appointments. These mechanisms have to be diligently implemented in practice.

Recommendation 12: The conditions and support for academic staff mobility for teaching need to be further strengthened at the institutional level. The institutions need to consider how to explicitly link ERASMUS mobility to criteria for election to academic titles. Actual implementation of sabbatical is another possibility.

Recommendation 13: Student mobility should especially be promoted in teacher education programmes. Students who participate in exchanges while in higher education are likely to seek international opportunities later once they are working in schools; hence they will be more likely to create international engagement opportunities for their own students in primary schools and high

schools. Fostering international orientation of students should not begin in higher education, but much earlier.

Recommendation 14: Institutions should consider having a limited number of institutions as their preferred partners. They should seek to both extend their partnerships in terms of different areas and deepen them, for example through developing joint degrees. The choice of preferred partners for such special international partnerships will almost necessarily be defined bottom-up by individual academics and research groups, but they should be coordinated and supported by the top leadership.

Recommendation 15: International offices and institutional leaders should monitor international activities and act if experiences with any partner institutions are bad or if there has not been any activity for longer periods of time, but also if with certain institutions more forms of cooperation are present. In the latter case they should consider extending and deepening the ongoing cooperation to yield further synergies.

Recommendation 16: Higher education institutions should not only build institutional partnerships with other higher education and research institutions, but also with industry for the purposes of student exchanges for training, academic field work, joint research projects, recruiting visiting lecturers, etc.

Recommendation 17: Institutions need to secure sufficient personnel, remuneration and recognition for the work of ERASMUS coordinators. Also, close cooperation between ERASMUS coordinators/international offices and offices for student affairs and personnel needs to be ensured. Personnel in the administrative offices need to be properly trained and instructed to manage data on international students and international academic staff, such as keeping records (especially on staff), as access to reliable data continues to be a challenge at many institutions.

Recommendation 18: In order to accept a greater share and number of incoming ERASMUS students, higher education institutions at both the university and faculty levels, as well as independent faculties and higher professional schools, need to have easily and immediately accessible information on how study is organized for incoming ERASMUS students: either through courses or programmes offered in foreign languages or by indicating which professors and courses are available to incoming Erasmus students each year.

To conclude, the present study is the first in Ukrainian higher education sector to systematically collect and analyze data from various sources – both quantitative and qualitative – on the impact of ERASMUS+ programme on internationalisation in the entire higher education system. The overall conclusion of the study is based on the statement to reinforce international offices at higher education institutions, because at many institutions we note that other support services, especially registrars and student affairs offices, are not yet sufficiently prepared to work with international students and staff. In our ideal world, each administrative unit within a higher education institution would cover its “international cooperation component” and then international

offices would only play a coordination role, if they exist at all (Finnish examples). Yet, perhaps with the exception of a very few institutions, we do not see this to be the case. In addition, institutional leaders tend to prioritize higher international cooperation in research over cooperation in teaching, since it is perceived as being directly relevant to the desired indicators of excellence and because the available funds are considerably higher.

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Мигович І. В. Вплив програми ERASMUS+ на інтернаціоналізацію вищої освіти в Україні

Результати дослідження, представлені в статті, спрямовані на висвітлення імовірності та напрямків впливу програми ERASMUS+ (аббревіатура до *Схеми дій Європейського співтовариства щодо мобільності студентів*) на процес інтернаціоналізації вищої освіти в Україні. ERASMUS+ представляє собою одну з провідних програм Європейського Союзу в галузі вищої освіти, опосередковано пов'язану з *Програмою навчання протягом усього життя*, метою якої є посилення якості та європейського виміру в галузі вищої освіти, сприяння мобільності та визнання результатів науково-практичних досліджень на території всієї Європи. Програма ERASMUS+ надає гранти для мобільності студентів, викладачів та адміністративних співробітників закладів вищої освіти і підтримує інші заходи щодо розширення європейського простору досліджень, такі як інтенсивні програми, розвиток освітніх програм або тематичних мереж. Стаття спрямована на аналіз факторного впливу участі в програмі ERASMUS+ на українські заклади вищої освіти та їх імовірної подальшої інтернаціоналізації й модернізації. Інтернаціоналізацію в цьому контексті, слідом за Дж. Найт, було розглянуто як процес інтеграції міжнародного, міжкультурного чи глобального компонентів до мети, функцій чи процесу набуття вищої освіти. В результаті дослідження було окреслено низку практичних рекомендацій для українських освітніх установ щодо активізації міжнародного виміру діяльності за допомогою участі в програмі ERASMUS+.

Ключові слова: інтернаціоналізація, програма обміну, програма ERASMUS+, якість освіти, академічна мобільність, іноземні студенти.

Мигович И. В. Влияние программы ERASMUS+ на интернационализацию высшего образования в Украине

Результаты исследования, представленные в статье, направлены на освещение вероятности и направлений влияния программы ERASMUS+ (аббревиатура для *Схемы действий Европейского сообщества по мобильности студентов*) на процесс интернационализации высшего образования в Украине. ERASMUS+ представляет собой одну из ведущих программ Европейского Союза в области высшего образования, косвенно связанную с Программой обучения в течение всей жизни, целью которой является усиление качества в области высшего образования, содействие мобильности и признание результатов научно-практических исследований на территории всей Европы. Программа ERASMUS+ предоставляет гранты для мобильности студентов, преподавателей и административных сотрудников высших учебных заведений и поддерживает другие мероприятия по расширению европейского пространства исследований, такие как интенсивные программы, развитие образовательных программ или тематических сетей. Статья направлена на анализ факторного влияния участия в программе ERASMUS+ на украинские учреждения высшего образования в аспекте их возможной дальнейшей интернационализации и модернизации. Интернационализация в этом контексте, вслед за Дж. Найт, рассмотрена как процесс интеграции международного, межкультурного или глобального компонентов к цели, функций или процессу получения высшего образования. В результате исследования были обозначены практические рекомендации для украинских образовательных учреждений по активизации международного пространства посредством участия в программе ERASMUS+.

Ключевые слова: интернационализация, программа обмена, программа ERASMUS+, качество образования, академическая мобильность, иностранные студенты.

Myhovych I. The Impact of the ERASMUS+ Programme on the Internationalization of Higher Education in Ukraine

The article highlights the effects of the ERASMUS+ programme (an acronym for European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) has on the internationalisation of higher education in Ukraine. ERASMUS+ is one of the European Union's flagship programmes in the area of higher education policy. It is related to the *Lifelong Learning Programme*, whose aim is to strengthen quality and the European dimension in higher education, foster mobility and improve transparency and recognition of studies across Europe. ERASMUS+ programme provides mobility grants to students, academics and administrative staff, but it also supports other activities to enhance the European dimension of studies, such as intensive programmes, the development of curricula or thematic networks. The main objective of the article has been to explore how participation in ERASMUS+

programme affects Ukrainian higher education institutions and indeed contributes to their further internationalisation and modernization. Internationalisation, thus, in this context and following J. Knight has been understood as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education. As the result of the study a number of practical recommendations for Ukrainian higher education institutions has been elaborated as to how to enhance the international dimension of their work by means of active participation in the programme.

Key words: internationalization, exchange programme, ERASMUS+ programme, quality of education, academic mobility, foreign students.

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