Internationalization as a way of adding value and attractiveness to university education

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Abstract
Internationalization in case of universities means creating links and strengthening cooperation with partners all around the world in order to ensure study or research opportunities with different aims and for various target groups, students as well as teaching and other staff included. The Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia is an active applicant in most of the published project calls. Several years of experience is used in managing and administering projects within the frameworks such as CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Program for University Studies), Erasmus+ (framework program for education, training, youth and sport), including Erasmus Mundus and TEMPUS programs. These possibilities offer study and research mobilities that benefit both the participants and the home and host universities, by providing feedback from their practice to be applied in future projects. The faculty supports the idea that a study stay during university studies shall be an essential part of the university studies for most of the students, thus in addition to short-term exchanges an International Master Double Degree Program in Business Economics will be provided jointly by the University of Agriculture in Krakow, Poland and the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia from the academic year 2016/2017. The paper includes information related to the project “Development of Public Accreditation of Agricultural programs in Russia (PACAgro) 2013-2016” (Project No. 543902-TEMPUS-1-2013-SK-TEMPUS-SMGR, co-funded by the Tempus Programme of the European Union).

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JEL Classification: I2, I20, I21, I23, I25

1. Introduction
Well-performing education as a result of investment into knowledge shall be the core of any educational institution providing new skills and competences, which in the end will benefit not only the institution and the individual, but the society as well, ensuring competitiveness on the labour market and social inclusion.

Internationalization in case of universities means creating links and strengthening cooperation with partners all around the world in order to ensure study or research opportunities with different aims and for various target groups, students as well as teaching and other staff included.
2. Data and Methods

The paper includes data and information gathered from practice and analysed during years of working on various international projects and the best experience and observations from them resulting in the idea of the double-degree programme offered by the University of Agriculture in Krakow, Poland and the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia.

3. Results and Discussion

The Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia is an active applicant in most of the project calls published by the European Commission and related organisations. Several years of experience enable managing and administering projects within the frameworks such as CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Program for University Studies), Erasmus+ (framework program for education, training, youth and sport), including Erasmus Mundus and TEMPUS programs at the faculty. The following paragraphs will introduce the added value and attractiveness of university education benefiting from international projects.

3.1 CEEPUS

CEEPUS is an acronym for "Central European Exchange Program for University Studies". The framework enables university networks of cooperating partner universities exchanging students and teachers with mobility grants, while the main objective of the CEEPUS III agreement is focus on joint programs (ideally leading to Joint Degrees, especially Joint Doctoral Programs) and promotion of cooperation in the framework of the EUSDR (EU Strategy for the Danube Region).

The legal basis for CEEPUS is an international Agreement signed by the member states and open for accession. Current member countries include Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, Prishtina/Kosovo is also participating (CEEPUS, 2016a).

The lean management organizational structure includes the highest ranking decision making body which is the Joint Committee of Ministers that meets once a year and takes all strategic decisions (CEEPUS, 2016c). The Central CEEPUS Office (operated by the secretary general and her assistant) ensures coordination, evaluation, program development and advertising (CEEPUS, 2016b). Except that, each country operates a National CEEPUS Office in charge of national implementation, these offices are integrated into already existing structures, usually national agencies (CEEPUS, 2016d).

Within CEEPUS, instead of transfer of funds the internal currency of "1 scholarship month" is used, defined as a full scholarship according to the local standard of living (for this the Joint Committee of Ministers is in charge, as well as for the overall budget). Each country pays its incoming students and teachers and has to pledge at least 100 scholarship months per academic year. Teachers have a workload of at least 6 teaching or supervising hours a week (i.e. a stay of 5 workdays) at the host university, while student mobilities can be awarded for a minimum of 3 months and a maximum of 10 months, with shorter stays permitted only for students working on their these or dissertations.

The mobility network Applied Economics and Management is functioning at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra for almost ten years and currently includes 23 European universities and distributes around 80 scholarship months each year among partner countries. Partner universities are:
the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Faculty of Economics and Management, the Slovak Republic,
University "Fan S. Noli" KORCA, Faculty of Agriculture, Albania,
BOKU - University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Institute of Marketing and Innovation, Austria,
FH Joanneum - University of Applied Sciences, Department of International Management, Austria,
University of National and World Economy, Department of Natural Resources Economics, Bulgaria,
University of Zagreb, Faculty of Agriculture, Croatia,
Mendel University in Brno, Faculty of Business Economics, the Czech Republic,
Czech University of Life Sciences Prague, Faculty of Economics and Management, the Czech Republic,
University of South Bohemia České Budějovice, Faculty of Economics, the Czech Republic,
University of Szeged, Faculty of Engineering, Hungary,
Szent István University, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Hungary,
State University of Tetovo, Faculty of Economics, Macedonia,
Technical University of Moldova, Engineering and Management in Production Systems, Moldova,
State University of Balti „Alecu Russo“, Faculty of Techniques, Physics, Mathematics and Informatics, Moldova,
University of Montenegro, Faculty of Economics, Montenegro,
Cracow University of Economics, Department of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Faculty of Economics and International Relations, Poland,
Poznan University of Economics, Faculty of Management, Poland,
University of Agriculture in Krakow, Faculty of Agriculture and Economics, Poland,
Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Poland,
The Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest, Faculty of Agri-food and Environmental Economy, Romania,
University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences, Department of Industrial Engineering and Management, Serbia,
University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Slovenia,
University of Primorska, Faculty of Management Koper, Slovenia.

3.2 Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the EU Programme enabling cooperation in the fields of education, training, youth and sport for the period 2014-2020 (OJEU, 2013). According to the main aim of the programme, all of the mentioned areas (education, training, youth and sport) can make a major contribution to help tackle socio-economic changes, the key challenges that Europe will be facing until the end of the decade and to support the implementation of the European policy agenda for growth, jobs, equity and social inclusion (European Commission, 2016; European Commission, 2015b).

The main changes since 2015 include new opportunities in Vocational Education and Training Mobility (with the possibility to apply with and without a VET Charter), more targeted Strategic Partnerships (clearer distinction between the aims innovation and exchange of best practices), revised format of Sector Skills Alliances as well as new opportunities in sport.
The FEM SUA in Nitra is an active applicant of most of the calls within this initiative, especially within the Key Action 2 (Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices) and among that the Capacity building in the field of higher education and the Strategic Partnerships projects.

Successful most recent project initiatives include:

- Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic partnerships project: *Food Quality and Consumer Studies*, No. 2014-1-SK01-KA2013-000464 (coordinator: the FEM SUA in Nitra),

### 3.3 Erasmus Mundus

Erasmus Mundus is another cooperation and mobility programme in the field of higher education. Its main aim is to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation with Third Countries. Except that, it contributes to the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of higher education institutions in Third Countries by increasing mobilities between the EU and these countries (EACEA, 2016).

The FEM SUA in Nitra is included as a project partner within the project named *European Union – Latin America Academic Links – EULALinks SENSE 2014-2018* (within the Action 2 Strand 1 Lot 8, Latin America, 2014-0874/001-001). The main coordinator of the project is the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU) in Germany.

The mobility scheme EULALinks SENSE consists of mobilities including undergraduate, master, doctorate, post-doctorate and staff levels for both Latin Americans and Europeans. The mobility flows promote multilateral cooperation between partners of the consortium. Students and staff in host and home universities benefit from the mobility scheme as they come into contact with people from other linguistic and cultural environment. Through the mobility scheme the society is enriched by open-minded and internationally experienced academics and students. This will also increase links between Europe and Latin America in all spheres of society thus contributing to cultural dialogue and mutual understanding (EULALinks SENSE, 2016). The different types of individual mobilities (in total 176) are awarded within the limits as follows: undergraduate (ca. 31 % of the total), master (ca. 25 % of the total), doctorate (ca. 20 % of the total), post-doctorate (ca. 14 % of the total), staff (ca. 10 % of the total). The project focuses on three target groups:

- **Target group 1 (TG1):** students registered at one of the Latin American Partner universities or European Partner universities at the time of submitting their application to the partnership. Undergraduate students must have successfully completed at least one year of studies in their home institution (54 % of the total).
- **Target group 2 (TG2):** students either registered in a Higher Education Institution (HEI) (not included in the partnership) of one of the Latin American countries concerned by the lot OR to have obtained a university degree or equivalent from a HEI of these countries. EU citizens registered in a European University (not included in the
partnership) or who have graduated at a university from an European country (13 % of the total).

- **Target group 3 (TG3):** students of one of the Partner countries in Latin America, who are part of the vulnerable target group (e.g. applicants with indigene origin) (33 % of the total).

During the academic year 2015/2016 we have welcomed 7 students from Latin America to our university (6 undergraduates for 6 months respectively and 1 doctoral student for 10 months, from which 2 were from Mexico, 4 from Colombia and 1 from El Salvador) and for the academic year 2016/2017 we will accept another 2 students from Guatemala and El Salvador. We can state that the already finished mobilities all enhanced the quality of the internationalization process at the university and applicants submitting their application forms are still expected within the third call.

Partners of the EULALinks SENSE project include the following institutions:

- **European Partners:**
  - Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU), Germany,
  - Universidad de Cordoba (UCO), Spain,
  - Université SupAgro Montpellier (SupAgro), France,
  - Czech University of Life Sciences (CULS), Prague, Czech Republic,
  - Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (SUA), Slovakía,
  - University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), Vienna, Austria,
  - Sapienza University of Roma (Uniroma1), Italy,
  - University of Extremadura, Badajoz / Cáceres, Spain,

- **Latin American Partners:**
  - Universidad Autónoma Chapingo (UACh), Texcoco, Mexico,
  - Universidad de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Caribe Nicaragüense (URACCAN), Managua, Nicaragua,
  - Universidad del Magdalena (Unimagdalena), Santa Marta, Colombia,
  - Universidad de los Llanos (Unillanos), Villavicencio, Colombia,
  - Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua (UNAN), Managua, Nicaragua,
  - Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFP), Honduras,
  - Universidad Rafael Landívar (URL), Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala,
  - Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala (USAC), Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala,
  - Universidad Veracruzana (UV), Veracruz, Mexico,
  - Universidad de El Salvador, San Salvador, El Salvador,
  - Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Curridabat, Costa Rica,
  - Universidad Nacional de Honduras (UNAH), Tegucigalpa, Honduras,

- **Associate Partners:**
  - The European Alliance on Agricultural Knowledge for Development (Agrinatura), Prague, Czech Republic,
  - Deutsch-Mexikanische Gesellschaft Berlin e.V. (DMGB), Berlin, Germany,
  - Universidad Centroamericana “José Simeón Cañas” (UCA), San Salvador, El Salvador,
  - Fundación Nacional para el Desarrollo (FUNDE), San Salvador, El Salvador,
  - Resguardo Kogi-Malayo-Arhuaco, Santa Marta, Colombia,
  - Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET), Buenos Aires, Argentina,
  - Corporación Rimisp – Centro Latinoamericano para el Desarrollo Rural (Rimisp), Santiago de Chile, Chile,
3.4 International Master Double Degree Program in Business Economics

The FEM SUA in Nitra supports the idea that a study stay during university studies shall be an essential part of the university studies for most of the students, thus in addition to short-term exchanges an International Master Double Degree Program in Business Economics (MSc ECONBIZ) will be provided jointly by the University of Agriculture in Krakow, Poland and the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia from the academic year 2016/2017.

Graduates of the international master double degree program in Business Economics will be able to analyse complex economic relations in business processes, propose and implement managerial decisions related to functioning of those processes. They shall apply a high degree of autonomy and creativity at managerial decision making and command a deep knowledge not only from operative business management, but also from the area of strategic decisions from viewpoint of globalization and economy as well.

Specification of the program is designed with the aim the graduates will be able to master managerial functions at top business management level, with priority given to agricultural primary production and food industry both as universal manager and specialist manager as well.

Due to international dimension of the study program graduates will gain practical experience, knowledge and skills from Visegrad / Central European region in a form of thematic excursions to partner institutions (business sphere, universities, European institutions) in Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, Poland and the Czech Republic.

The duration of the International Master Double Degree Program in Business Economics will be four semesters, with 120 ECTS credits to be achieved. The first and third semester of the program will be attended at the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra. The second semester will be attended at the University of Agriculture in Krakow, while the fourth semester is assigned to one course at the University of Agriculture in Krakow and the preparation of the master thesis at the home university and finish the programme with a Final Scientific Colloquium, in which the results of the thesis will be presented and discussed in a critical manner (thesis defence) and knowledge of the profile courses will be verified also.

The official language of instruction will be English, with a strong recommendation to apply also national languages (Slovak and Polish). Students will be encouraged to study Slovak or Polish language as the foreign language during their stay in Slovakia or Poland respectively.

During the study, each university will send to the second university a Transcript of Records to summarize all measurable achievements (ECTS, grades) during each semester achieved at another university. All records will be part of a diploma supplement with full recognition of all ECTS credits obtained during the master program. A diploma supplement will be used indicating all obtained ECTS credits with specification of training hours, language of instruction, the place of the course and all other relevant details. Evaluation and marks of exams will correspond with the rules of ECTS at each of the cooperating institutions.

After passing the final examination, both universities will award the academic Master degree in „Business Economics“ and title “inžinier – Ing.” at the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra and the title “magister” at the University of Agriculture in Cracow.
4. Conclusion

Some possibilities offering study and research mobilities at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra that benefit both the participants and the home and host universities, by providing feedback from their practice to be applied in future projects, were described in the presented paper. The faculty supports the idea that a study stay during university studies shall be an essential part of the university studies for most of the students, therefore an International Master Double Degree Program in Business Economics will be provided from the academic year 2016/2017, created based on years of experience from managing and administering mobility projects.

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