MONITORING INTERNATIONALISATION OF CZECH HIGHER EDUCATION (MICHE)

INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING INTERNATIONALISATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

December 2020



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MEYS) and the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research (DZS), the Monitoring of Institutions of Czech Higher Education (MICHE) program began in the Fall of 2018. Since the inception of MICHE, a team of international higher education experts has visited 12 Czech universities. The monitoring consists of a multi-stage process including self-evaluation, expert visits and interviews, Action Plans, consultations and feedback loop, and national and institutional level reports and recommendations. This report contains a consolidated summary of the experts' findings, major points, and trends which are not isolated, but are common to the majority of involved universities, as well as issues which hold national significance and implications. The report identifies 8 main areas to focus on strengthening Czech universities' internationalisation and offers solutions and recommendations at the national and institutional levels.

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List of Monitored Higher Education Institutions

2018

- Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci / Palacký University in Olomouc (UP)
- Univerzita Pardubice / University of Pardubice (UPa)
- Vysoká škola chemicko-technologická v Praze University of Chemistry and Technology, Prague (VŠCHT/UCT)

2019

- Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích / University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice (JU/USB)
- Mendelova univerzita v Brně / Mendel University in Brno (MENDELU)
- Ostravská univerzita / University of Ostrava (OU/UO)
- Univerzita Hradec Králové / University of Hradec Králové (UHK)
- Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně Tomas Bata University in Zlín (UTB/TBU)
- Vysoké učení technické v Brně / Brno University of Technology (VUT/BUT)

2020

- Česká zemědělská univerzita v Praze / Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (ČZU/CULS)
- Technická univerzita v Liberci / Technical University of Liberec (TUL)
- Západočeská univerzita v Plzni / University of West Bohemia in Pilsen (ZČU/UWB)

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Components and Process of Monitoring

The monitoring process consists of the following components and sequential steps for each university:

- DZS solicitation of interest in participation in MICHE and annual selection of universities
- Self-evaluation report by participating universities
- Experts' visit (2 days, 2-3 experts, in-person in 2018 and 2019; virtual in 2020)
- Experts' report to university (includes discussion and feedback period)
- University Action Plans (includes experts' reaction and suggestion)
- Ongoing monitoring of university Action Plans by experts on an annual basis
- Annual planning meetings and report to MEYS organized by DZS



AREAS FOR STRENGTHENING UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONALISATION



- **1. Degree Mobility**
- 2. International Student Services
- **3.** Outbound Mobility
- 4. Blended and Virtual Mobilities
- 5. Degree and Credit Recognition
- 6. Funding for Internationalisation
- 7. Strategic Management
- 8. Programmes in Foreign Languages English-Medium Instruction
- 9. Internationalisation at Home

DEGREE MOBILITY

Corresponding Strategy for Internationalisation Section: 4. Creating an International Environment at Universities and Promotion Abroad

Observations:

- The complex of marketing, applicant retention, and admissions processing, which are best accomplished in a connected, coordinated manner, and which must take place during a very specific term and with great efficiency and speed, are usually distributed across many different and rather uncoordinated units of Czech universities.
- There are positive examples of central level International Relations Offices being made responsible for international marketing activities for their respective universities.
- There are only a few isolated positive examples of those International Relations Offices providing methodological support to faculties in order to pair the administrative necessities associated with the admissions process with the needs of particular countries in which the marketing efforts are focused.

Observations:

Admission Conditions are very often created without the necessary connection between the visa procurement process and key dates within the target-country, such as diploma receipt. At best they are typically designed to meet the minimum legal requirements, but rarely designed to achieve the intended result.

Recommendation:

Organizational structure and the resulting process may be arranged in varying ways but should be a result of a complex analysis of all interconnected parts of the respective process(es). The result of such analysis is likely to yield one of two approaches:

- either a blended process, whereby the various units, from central to faculty levels, work in a much more coordinated manner, spreading and integrating methodology, and creating accountability for timely work in each step of the process
- or in a more centralized manner, where many of the tasks common to each faculty, and which require significant development of know-how, are localized in a unit positioned to develop methodological advancement, concentrated expertise, and transparent, quantifiable results, but where key responsibilities such as candidate-evaluation are maintained within faculties.

Recommendation:

Perform an analysis on the key components of the Admission Conditions, ensuring connection to a strategically defined complex with student recruitment practices around target market and subject area, and the needs of the respective Departments responsible for teaching.

Observations:

Strategic partnership development for the purposes of attracting long term, degree seeking students exists only sporadically, and rarely as a coordinated effort utilizing resources and know-how from both the central and faculty levels. **1. DEGREE MOBILITY**

Recommendation:

• Partnership development strategy is covered further in other sections of this report. Such development strategies must comprise key modes of cooperation such as pathway opportunities and articulation agreements. These often necessitate development of partnerships in third countries, which yield the vast majority of degree seeking students in not only Czech Republic, but also Europe. This mode of partnership development is largely — though not only — a student recruitment activity and should be connected to the realities of the admissions processes as well as marketing, utilizing the know-how developed in these areas.

2. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

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Corresponding Strategy for Internationalisation Section: 4. Creating an International Environment at Universities and Promotion Abroad

Observations:

Commonly cited problems by international students include:

- Problems associated with lack of English use in dormitories primarily, but also on campus and in the surrounding city.
- Initial arrival to the university usually problems associated with English language instruction and signage in cities, public transportation, etc.
- Procurement of health care.
- Short, infrequent office hours at faculties with over-burdened study offices
- Basic services for students being carried out by well-meaning but under-equipped groups who step in to fill a void left by lack of university resources, mainly ESN.
- Problems for students who must deal with OAMP after arrival, needing to navigate sometimes complicated procedures with Czech speaking foreign police officers.

Recommendation:

- Determine the desired level of services across each of the components of student care. Gain regular, structured feedback from international students from different countries, study modes, and fields of study through interactive meetings to find and address their concerns.
- These same mechanisms can also serve to create synergies between international student ambassador and international alumni plans of both DZS and many universities.
- Determine the most cost-effective organizational structure to deliver the desired level of services to international students by examining the distribution of service-provision across faculty and central levels, reducing the redundancy of multiple centres of competence for sometimes complex problems, but which are common to students regardless of field of study.



3. OUTBOUND MOBILITY

Corresponding Strategy for Internationalisation Section: 1. Developing Global Competences of University Students and Staff

Observations:

- Increasing participation in outbound mobility is often the top goal in the area of internationalisation of the HEIs visited in the MICHE project. There is generally great commitment to this goal, good awareness of the mobility barriers that hinder wider participation in mobility opportunities, and in most HEIs visited specific measures designed to promote study abroad and achieve greater participation.
- While this internationalisation activity is prioritised by most of the visited universities, the majority is yet to develop specific quantitative targets to be reached in terms of increased participation (most related objectives are expressed in a generic way - 'increase' of outgoing mobility, 'more' mobility). Systematic approaches linking promotion, preparation, support during, and integration post-mobility, including smooth recognition, with a clear attribution of roles and responsibilities over success or underperformance are still rather the exception in visited universities.
- Having good data and monitoring systems of mobilities remains work in progress for most universities visited as well, though more data seems to have become generally available in recent years.
- Promoting participation in outgoing mobility is generally the 'job' of the central International Office, and of the corresponding structures/roles within the faculties. It is rare that academic staff are centrally and systematically involved in the active promotion of study abroad (with some notable exceptions).
- A number of the visited institutions were in the process of internally-reflecting on the wider introduction of

"mobility windows" (i.e. periods of mobility that are integrated as a normal component of the curriculum/ study plan), as a means to change the institutional culture that mobility is an add-on, rather than a necessary component of the education process to develop global competences, to ease recognition challenges and to promote participation of students (easing the fear that mobility will lead to an extension of studies). There is scope for wider and deeper conversations about "mobility windows" in the respective institutions, to achieve a common understanding of different models and of fitness for purpose (depending on subject area specificities and overarching goals).

- Many of the visited institutions worked with their local ESN sections to both welcome incoming students as well as to promote participation in outgoing mobility directly or indirectly (e.g. the volunteer 'buddies' usually meet incoming students, they become interested in their cultures and consider to later go abroad themselves). There is great variety though in the degree of coordination between the central IROs and the ESN sections, as well as in the degree of support that the ESN sections receive from the 'host' institutions. This is an area that would benefit from more attention, as there is demonstrably a positive correlation between good coordination and support in service delivery and better outcomes in terms of integration (for incoming) and participation (for outgoing).
- Most of the promotion activities of outgoing mobility target the home student population in general, or students in specific faculties, departments. With the upcoming objectives of increas-

3. OUTBOUND MOBILITY

ing participation of underrepresented groups of students (e.g. from lower socio-economic background, with disabilities, with families or working students), more tailor-made promotion activities will be necessary in order to reach these specific categories of students, many of which are difficult to easily identify.

 Outgoing staff mobility is generally promoted in the visited Czech universities. Several universities showed innovative ways of strategically utilising staff mobility to pave the way for more successful ensuing student mobility (concrete objectives related to easing recognition, to double degree preparation, specific assignments for mobile staff while abroad meant to maximise institutional impact upon return, etc.).

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 Given the importance of this goal for most universities visited and the remaining challenges to increasing participation in outgoing mobility, it would be very beneficial for all HEIs to outline specific quantitative and qualitative targets to reach, as well as more comprehensive, coordinated processes for supportive and promotion measures, together with a clear allocation and roles and responsibilities, and a supportive data collection and monitoring processes.

- Related to the above, work systematically on addressing the biggest mobility obstacles, and particularly recognition problems (see the recognition section for more specific measures).
- To the extent that specific institutions would like to widen inclusion in mobility, and address specific underrepresented groups, the support measures and promotional activities would have to be adapted to these specific target groups.
- For the institutions interested in the systematic integration of "mobility windows" into the curricula, facilitate in-depth internal discussion of various models and approaches, to be able to take into account subject area specificities, and make sure the adopted models are fit for purpose.
- Following the examples of several Czech HEIs, the other institutions could develop more coordinated ways of working with the ESN sections for promoting mobility, and for recognising volunteering activities in ESN (financially or via other resources, as well as academically, for example by awarding credits for this activities given their learning outcomes in the area of international and intercultural competences).





BLENDED AND VIRTUAL MOBILITIES

Observations:

During the few MICHE visits carried out in September - November 2020, most of the Czech universities seemed to be counting on a return to 'normal' mobility as of the spring semester 2020/2021 onwards or in the next academic year at the latest. Generally, most of the universities visited did not seem so interested the further development of the new mobility formats, beyond what they were facilitating as part of the emergency response to the pandemic. There was generally great commitment to the physical mobility formats, and some concern and lack of information concerning blended formats and COIL-type of collaborations.

Recommendation:

As new funding lines will support blended and online formats, it could be very useful for universities to internally reflect which is these formats are in line with their goals, which new formats could be supported, if any, and what are the needs in terms of further capacity and technological developments

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4. BLENDED AND VIRTUAL MOBILITIES

5. DEGREE AND CREDIT RECOGNITION

Corresponding Strategy for Internationalisation Section: 2. The Internationalisation of University Study Programmes

Observations:

- Only a few HEIs see recognition of courses as a factor for selecting partners. Knowing about the remaining recognition challenges and the fact that in several (if not many) cases, study abroad leads to an extension of studies for the mobile students, the experts see scope for an evaluation of existing mobility partnerships. This could lead to re-focusing and enhancing mobility with those partners with whom student mobility is problem-free (both logistically and educationally).
- While credit recognition is considered one of the major issues in motivation, there are no systematic answers (e.g. guidelines) to the problem, although on faculty level there are attempts to re-negotiate the Erasmus bilateral agreements
- Structural inflexibility within programme rules leading to lack of credit recognition
- Knowledge and skills gained during mobilities are rather highly regarded by future employers, and thus should be valued over a more narrow, very particular learning outcome that may be somewhat missed due to a mobility.

Recommendation:

· Create and implement a system to systematically review Erasmus+ partnerships to verify quality standards in order to increase credit recognition of outgoing Erasmus+ mobilities. Analyse the set of agreements to ensure the right assortment of courses for students exist to ensure the desired mobility can be achieved within the given study programme

- Perform a full analysis of mobility agreements to identify under-performing ones and to be able to take follow-up measures. This would be a crucial step for the full roll-out of mobility windows, as they require trustworthy partners and full, automatic recognition arrangements.
- Actively encourage academic staff mobility (e.g. via Erasmus+ teaching staff mobility), for the academic staff to be able to visit partner universities, become more familiar with their teaching methods and build higher trust, to ensure full recognition of ECTS gained by outgoing students at these partners
- Develop a recognition policy at institutional level, with clear commitments from faculties and academics. It would be essential to also develop university-wide approach on recognition of ECTS earned abroad at partner universities, in collaboration with the responsible academics within the faculties, so that the mobility objectives can actually be achieved. Enactment as a university-wide initiative allows various groups to share know-how, overcome failure, and increases accountability.
- Base credit recognition on graduate profiles, not on mechanical comparison of courses and enforce its application, to ensure partial recognition doesn't continue to be a disincentive for outgoing mobility. To ensure (a) standard processes; (b) that no student is expected to either repeat a year or undertake supplementary work as a result of the mobility.

tion.

Introduce the system of pre-recogni-

5. DEGREE AND CREDIT RECOGNITION

6. FUNDING FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

Corresponding Strategy for Internationalisation Section: 5 – Strengthening the Strategic Management of Internationalisation

Observations

For many universities, faculties, departments, and down to individual study programs, there are no financial incentives or mechanisms to promote and enhance the recruitment of fee-paying students. Although part of the issue may be due to national regulations, lack of understanding of the limitations and possibilities has resulted in lethargy in this area.

Recommendation:

- Administrative and financial procedures must be created in order to receive and utilize funds from fee-paying students to advance internationalisation.
- A culture of student support services needs to be created in order to treat fee-paying students as customers.

Observations

For all Czech universities, the majority of their funding for research activities – including the international dimension – naturally comes from Czech national sources. Many Czech universities have been successful at applying for European funding as well; those that have not had much are at least putting efforts into securing more. As the nature of internationalisation moves increasingly beyond the traditional Erasmus exchanges, with Czech universities seeking to attract global students, staff, and partners, diversification of funding sources is already a priority.

Recommendation:

- University and faculty management can shift focus towards cooperation outside of Europe, and lead by example.
- Project offices, both central and faculty level, can be instructed to actively explore and pursue the many collaboration and funding opportunities that exist with third countries. This can be done through those countries' embassies in Prague, through Czech embassies in the third countries, and with university partners in the third countries. Significant research and partnership funding is available with countries including Australia, Canada, China, Israel, Japan, Korea, Russia, Taiwan, USA, and other research-intensive countries.



6. FUNDING FOR INTERNATIONALISATION



STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Corresponding Strategy for Internationalisation Section: 5 – Strengthening the Strategic Management of Internationalisation

Observations:

Strategic Planning concerning internationalisation has largely been haphazard at Czech universities in the past, and only in the recent 2–3 years has been taken more seriously and paid attention to. In the past, at the institutional level few internationalisation staff were ever involved with the creation of their institution's strategy, much less refer to the national document or priorities. Planning for internationalisation has been typically only very loosely tied to the document, and activities' connection to the plan are often only considered post-hoc, at yearend, for example.

Recommendation:

University staff must be encouraged, incentivized, and held responsible by university leadership to:

- Understand their own University Strategic Plan
- Make specific connections between the National Strategy and their University Strategic Plan and documents
- Incorporate their University Strategic Plan into their actual work plans and initiatives
- Provide methodological support for Faculty IROs and/or internationalisation officers on fulfilment of initiatives and indicators

Observations:

The concept of Strategic Partnerships is still in its infancy at Czech institutions, although it has been a global trend for the past 5+ years. This negatively affects Czech universities' global positioning and reputation, and as this trend intensifies it will increasingly become more difficult to conclude comprehensive, university-wide partnerships, especially with prestigious foreign institutions.

Recommendation:

Vice-Rectors for Internationalisation should spearhead efforts at their universities to prepare and implement strategic partnerships, through the following process:

- Compile comprehensive data (quantitative and qualitative) on existing cooperation, exchanges, projects, research, and staff collaborations and relationships with/at foreign institutions.
- This goes beyond Erasmus agreements, but similar principles in knowledge management of relationships (i.e. creation of databases or excel charts) can be practiced.
- Analysis of existing relationships and contacts across the university and assessment of strengths and opportunities for expansion to other faculties, academic fields, and sources of income (projects, grants, exchanges).
- University management must make selective decisions regarding investment in strategic partnerships based

7. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

on the university's positioning, Strategic Plan, and priorities for internationalisation.

- Faculties should be brought into the process and connected with each other as well as the central administration concerning these efforts.
- Comprehensive efforts to build a limited number of strategic partnerships should be planned and carried out over the period of several years. University alliances and networks, as well as new grants and funding mechanisms, should be utilized to increase targeted, close cooperation with newly identified strategic partners.
- Modes of cooperation such as double and joint degree, short programmes such as summer and winter school, as well as articulation agreements from bachelor's to master's to PhD. should form an integral and early part of the partnership development planning process.

Observations:

One of the greatest hindrances in university internationalisation is the lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities between central administration and faculties of a university. Since faculty autonomy, including in internationalisation, is enshrined in Czech legal regulations, funding mechanisms, and university governance tradition, it should not and cannot be discarded or ignored. However, there are several areas where it makes sense to utilize and deploy resources at a central level:

Recommendation:

Areas of central support can include:

- Investment of resources for marketing, promotion, and visibility enhancement internationally should be done at the central level, with cooperation and input from faculties. Central marketing services need to be developed and offered to faculties. DZS can offer support for planning and training for institution-wide international marketing.
- Enhancing global social media presence in English.
- Central project offices can assist faculty project offices in the identification of new and different grant and funding opportunities, notably with third countries and non-Czech government sources

7. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

8.

PROGRAMMES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES – ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION

Strategy for Internationalisation Section: 2. The internationalisation of University Study Programs

Observations:

- The development of further foreign-language (and primarily English-Taught Programmes – ETPs) is a priority for all of the visited universities. Generally, at Czech universities ETPs develop organically, as an initiative of individual academics or study programmes. Typically, there is little involvement, support or coordination from the central level, though there is a wish to better coordinate the development of such programmes across the institutions, and generally increase their numbers.
- Many of the existing ETPs suffer from under-enrolment – in many instances, the launch of a programme was still pending because there were not enough (usually under 5) students willing to enrol in the programme.
- In contrast, other programmes are oversubscribed, with staff reporting that often they agree, voluntarily, to go above the maximum capacity, as they know that the incoming students don't have enough course options in English unless they take courses from other faculties, although this increases the academics' workload significantly, and they are generally not compensated for these extra activities.
- A recurring theme was that often the development of English-taught courses is not remunerated, as they are not accredited, and thus that the academic staff teaching the respective courses do this pro bono.
- Most of the universities speak of the challenges that some of their staff encounter to teach in English. The emphasis is put at Czech universities on further equipping staff with English language competences, but less so on supporting them to develop pedagogical skills in English as a medium of instruction.

Recommendation:

- Academic staff at Czech universities would generally further benefit from tailor-made training and support for teaching in English (including English-language courses applied to their professional needs), as well as for teaching in an international classroom (support for adapting the pedagogical materials, dealing with cultural differences, diverse and diverging student expectations and learning styles, etc.). In many cases, these courses could be customised and offered by the language centres that are part of the respective universities.
- Incentivise staff to participate in language learning and pedagogical training in English, as an essential quality enhancement measure.
- Develop new ETPs and/or joint programmes only after a feasibility assessment (comparison with other similar programmes in the country/region, analysis of related tuition fees, analysis of recruitment potential both from abroad and at home, analysis of the marketing needs and efforts for recruitment, etc.).
- Develop a clear roadmap for the further development of English-taught and joint programmes, building on the existing knowledge of the staff involved in the pioneer programmes, on related analyses and professional networks of joint programme coordinators, in order not to reinvent the wheel.
- Facilitate peer-learning activities between the faculties and programme with less and more experience in the launch and running of ETPs.

9 INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

Corresponding Strategy for Internationalisation Section 1. Developing Global Competences of University Students and Staff -and-2. Internationalisation of University Study Programmes

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Observations:

- Although the general concept of Internationalisation at Home is somewhat familiar to the universities, they do not see it as a strategic tool for delivering international experience for the local students. A common understanding is missing regarding Internationalisation at home among academics, staff and university leaders.
- Internationalisation of curriculum is mostly considered by the universities as developing English taught programmes.
- In most of the cases good practices of internationalisation are island-like. Bottom-up initiatives emerges from innovative members of the faculties, working very well on course-, department- or even faculty-level, but it is exceptional when these examples are shared with other faculties or improved to a university level policy.

Recommendation:

- Develop a clear strategy on internationalisation at home with the involvement of all the stakeholders (students as well). Design and gradually introduce elements of an "Internationalisation at Home" strategy that goes beyond English-Taught programs.
- Most of the examples for I@H are not 'revolutionary', but rather pragmatic. Include the use of teaching materials in foreign languages, integrating international content, practices, placements and traineeships in 'international pairs' at local companies, as well as requiring teachers to integrate what they learned during their mobility period into their courses or finding companies with an international background to host internships. Integration of international learning outcomes into the curricula and of courses, volunteer work that would support the achievement of those outcomes at home, rather than abroad. Projects to solve local challenges involving foreign staff and students.

Observations:

- Regarding the content of the curriculum there are only a few attempts to revise the curriculum to the needs of the international students and/or to use the curriculum as a tool to offer international experience to the local students.
- In some cases, the internationalisation of curriculum affects only the English taught programmes. Given the scarcely present mixing of international and local students, this practice totally excludes not mobile Czech students from gaining the international experience.
- According to academics and staff, a key obstacle preventing Czech students from joining international activities seems to be a lack of confidence in their own foreign language skills. While international students, however, agree that the language skills of the Czech students are much better in general than they think.
- Some academics believe that making a general policy to use foreign language during the courses (e.g. attending lectures, taking up courses, reading literature or making student assignments) compulsory would be against equal opportunities or even against the laws. It may be timely to re-consider such views; a widely discussed and well-known policy-framework would accelerate the alignment of different approaches to this issue.

Recommendation:

- Provide the international classroom experience to Czech students to promote mobility.
- Strengthen the international dimension of curriculum for both Czech and international students. Do not to develop different programmes for the Czech and international students so curriculum development would serve better internationalisation at home.
- Open up the remaining slots for Czech students in English Taught Programmes. Launching an ETP is much easier and sustainable if it is open to local students.
- Include courses/modules into the curriculum so both local and international students can enhance their intercultural skills and competences.
- Encouraging Czech students to use foreign languages in learning situations would significantly improve the internationalisation at home experience, and the popularity of mobility programmes. Academics should provide them affirmative feedback.

Observations:

- It is a common practice to offer academics English language courses, but a simple language course is quite different to a complex 'how to teach in English in a mixed classroom' course.
- Academics often lack the training to be prepared for teach in an international (intercultural skills) or mixed classroom. Primarily they have earned experience during their mobility stay abroad and/or they are learning by doing. Neither ways are systematic nor quality assured.
- Employment of foreign academics is rare, visiting scholars often give lectures in not mixed, English taught courses.

Observations:

 Although extracurricular activities are present in most of the universities but not as a hidden agenda for internationalisation of the curriculum more as a necessity for improving the study experience for international students.

Recommendation:

- Professional support academics to teach in English also give pedagogical methodology support to them to teach in a mixed classroom. As PhD students are potential future academics, include these into their curriculum.
- A more conscious use of academic mobility could enhance internationalisation at home.

Recommendation:

- Universities should offer support and help to both local and foreign students to come out of their 'bubbles'. Integration of foreign and local student bodies would be a good start.
- Promotion study abroad by international students or their countries in schools and high schools.
- Grant students that volunteer with ESN ECTS points for intercultural activities as a good first example of how such activities could be recognised and included as part of students' education at home.



9. INTERNATIONALISATION AT HOME

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