
Report from the Summer School

STUDENTS AT CROSSROADS OF EDUCATION: LESSONS LEARNED AND TO BE LEARNED

Technical University of Crete, Chania, Crete

August 22 – 26, 2011

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

- According to our agenda and topics determined as the most important to be discussed, we exchanged our knowledge about models of students' organizations (as independent organizations) and students' representative bodies (as a part of faculty or university).
- Also, we exchanged ideas about motivation of fellow students and possibilities of networking among students within region, EU and on global level. We concluded that actively maintaining contacts inside and outside of one's organization, engaging in professional and community activities and increasing one's organizational visibility through accepting challenging work assignments are good examples of networking behaviors.
- Networking is essential for development of our skills, knowledge and self-perception, so is building networks of valuable contacts. Transparency is recognized as one of the most important issues for good and effective students' organization/body. Our duty is to inform colleagues about all our activities and possibilities which our positions offer. It is a good way to intrigue other people for involvement in our activities and decision – making process.
- We agreed that our existing SIGMUS portal (platform made for communication between all stakeholders involved in) should be kept sustainable and that we will stay in touch even after the scheduled project activities.

Concrete proposals for developing students' structures are:

- Every organization and Students' parliament should perform SWOT analysis;
- We should determine all available resources, that is human and other resources (free time, contacts, finances, equipment);
- Every activity has to be presented on very transparent way;
- Every member should take care for its own development (attending courses, team building trainings, learn languages, work scientific papers, read news about students' life...)

- Are students at Serbian Universities involved in extracurricular activities?
 - Many students from the Serbian universities are actively involved in extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities are a topic of the greatest importance for the Serbian students, which is evident from the great number of students who were ready to talk about the topic. Students involved in extracurricular activities have better chances in finding jobs and gaining scholarships. The connections they make performing such activities are helpful in finding employment.
 - One of the reasons why students at the Serbian universities are rarely involved in extracurricular activities is the lack of time. This information implies that Bologna system is not entirely effectively implemented in Serbia, and that the re-evaluation of the ECTS implementation, provided by the WP4 of the SIGMUS project, is of the greatest importance for Serbian students.
- Are extracurricular activities recognized by respective Universities?
 - The state of affairs is not uniform at all the universities, neither are their uniform within individual universities. That implies there is a lack of regulation in this field; this problem should be approached within the WP2 of the SIGMUS project.
 - Universities can benefit from encouraging students involvement in extracurricular activities, as well. The good example is the University of Maribor, Slovenia experience, where special student body helps mobilize and regulate students' extracurricular activities, from which their university has benefits.
 - The issue of students' extracurricular activities is not only a matter of Serbian universities, but also a matter of Serbian society as a whole. Individuals' social responsibility and readiness to help improve the entire society is not always appreciated. Therefore, the changes within the intellectual and academic stratum in this field should as well benefit the change in the entire society.
- If yes, have ECTS been assigned for those activities?
 - At the greatest part of the Serbian universities, extracurricular activities are not rewarded with ECTS points. Situation in EU partner countries is not uniform: while in Austria students are awarded extra ECTS points, in Slovenia they are not.
 - Students engaged in extracurricular activities have different opinions whether the ECTS points, or some other kind of reward, should be assigned for involvement in extracurricular activities. Those who are leaders of different bodies, managers, organizers et sim. think they have already gained a lot by only making contacts and gaining great experience that will help them with the employment. However, most of the participants agree that the students who are only occasionally involved in certain activities, who are in the lower stratum of certain volunteering bodies, or/and whose role is mostly executive, i.e. to provide help, when needed, should be granted ECTS points or some other benefits for such activities.
- Relative Vs. Absolute: criteria for evaluation of extracurricular activities?
 - From everything that was said during the discussion, a conclusion can be made that students find useful not only activities closely related with their field of expertise, but the other activities as well.

- Extra:
 - The students, who have spoken about their active involvement in extracurricular activities, and, above all, representatives of the EU partner universities, were kindly asked to deliver a written report about the students' involvement in extracurricular activities and their evaluation at their universities. Those reports will be used as the basis for the final report on current state of extracurricular activities in Serbian and EU partners universities, but will, as well, serve as a basis for developing program of the Round Table at the University of Megatrend, planned by the extracurricular activities enhancement and evaluation plan.
- Students have have different interests and they participate in different areas, but students representatives needs to inform and motivate other students to participate all the time.
- University professors have to have focus on students and their development during study.
- There is need to write a diary for the WP 4 and how to motivate students to write it. The results will be used to analyse ECTS and propose some changes
- After the presentation on Students involvement in curriculum decisioning and learning outcomes, discussion was on "What happens if after fulfilling it we discover that worth more ESTC than previous" . In practice, there is an example of calculating by the equation (hours needed to read a book/25 hours)+ECTS spend on class=ECTS of exam.
- E-services have been implemented at some faculties as a good way to upload documents, discussion that is not visible for professors. Distance Learning was accredited in 2008 and there is a certain progress from that time as a very good example and practical application of e-services.
- Regarding other experiences, in Austria, students have expert groups that include those who are responsible for implementation and evaluation of ECTS. In Maribor Student Council is responsible for making a survey fulfilled.
- Problems of implementing Bologna process Serbian view – Bologna brings confusion and it is felt that more articles in the law of HE in order to improve Bologna easier. Also faculties in Serbia are too much independent and they are implementing Bologna without supervision of University. We concluded that this change is good, and that we have to adapt as soon as possible. Bologna brings us a lot of advantages and disadvantages, but as students are more engaged in management of Universities there are many opportunities to improve the reform of HE. Bologna process needs a time to be implemented, it can not happed over the night.

Written by

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