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**Student and Staff Mobility
under the Erasmus-LLP Programme
at the Institute of Political Science,
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The task of universities is to conduct research and, in equal measure, provide instruction to their students. There are many methods of realising the latter mission. The Erasmus-LLP programme allows for imbuing the teaching process with a practical, and at the same time, international element. To start with, it is noteworthy that the popular Erasmus programme has been incorporated into a wider project, namely, the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)¹, informed by the assumption that a couple of years after one's graduation either from school or university, one's knowledge needs upgrading and complementing. Nowadays, technology becomes morally outdated in no time at all, and the knowledge acquired in one's youth simply becomes obsolete. Looking at this from another perspective – the perspective of one's entire life – another reflection comes to mind: one can say that the modern labour market enforces horizontal mobility on its participants. Increasingly often, one not only changes the place of work and one's employer, but the whole sector as well. Thus, the need to retrain arises. In addition, new jobs are created at the point where different sectors meet, such as: management, accounting, sociology, law, psychology, media studies, etc. Therefore it has become increasingly common to complement one's

¹ Since 2014, a new programme will be implemented: „Erasmus+”.

education not in the area in which one has received the first diploma, a BA or MA, but in a related area. This allows for greater flexibility and increases one's competitiveness on the labour market. Keeping this very important practical aspect aside, however, it is equally important that through life-long learning one is obliged to continuously develop one's own knowledge, personality and experience.

The assumption behind the Erasmus programme is international mobility by means of the partial studies abroad scheme, designed to enrich the human capital of the whole European Union². During the course of their studies, students may move abroad for one or two semesters to a partner institution, where they are to attend classes, sit for exams and finally receive their grade sheet. The biggest advantage for the students consists in the fact that they are not required to ask for the dean's leave from their original university and upon return are not required to catch-up and make up for the course work they had missed. The 'pass' marks and grades they received are directly transposed to their original studies and time spent abroad computed as if they had been studying here. For several years already the Erasmus-LLP has also facilitated going abroad for professional internships.

The second aspect of the Erasmus-LLP involves university staff, both academics and administrative employees. The former are allowed short stays, up to a week, in which they conduct classes. The latter can take the internships or training at a foreign institution. It is also possible to apply for funds from the Erasmus programme for, the so-called, intensive programmes, for instance, for organising summer schools. In a word, the Erasmus-LLP programme typically serves teaching purposes rather than being research oriented.

The Erasmus-LLP should not be confused with the Erasmus Mundus (EM) programme established in 2003 and intended to further cooperation with 'third country' institutions, that is from outside of the EU, EFTA/EEA as well as EU candidate countries. Erasmus Mundus is divided into three actions, as they are called. EM Action 1 provides for the creation of joint second degree studies and doctoral studies by the university consortia. Graduates receive a diploma of at least two universities, or a double diploma, depending on the legal groundwork. The EM Action 2 (formerly the Erasmus Mundus External Cooperation Window) provides for the exchange of students, lecturers and administrative staff between

² P. Paillet, *Erasmus: un échange de compétences*, "Informations sociales" 2006, No. 1 (129), p. 135.

'European' and 'third country' universities. Finally, EM Action 3 is designed to improve the competitiveness and attractiveness of higher education in Europe³.

The original version of the Erasmus-LLP programme was launched more than 25 years ago⁴ on the strength of the EEC Council of Ministers' decision, on June 15, 1987. The name 'Erasmus' refers to Erasmus of Rotterdam, the 15/16th century Dutch thinker, and at the same time it is the acronym of the English name for 'European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students'. In the years 1995–2007 Erasmus was part of the wider Socrates and Socrates II programmes, and as of 2007 has been part of the 'lifelong learning' programme. Poland joined the programme in 1998 and initially it could cooperate only with the universities of the 'fifteen' and the EFTA/EEA area. Only when Poland joined the EU in 2004 could it work together with Turkey, with other 'new' member states, and Romania and Bulgaria. To date, the Erasmus-LLP has involved about four thousand higher education institutions from 33 countries: 28 EU member states, Turkey, Norway, Island, Switzerland and Lichtenstein. In some areas of the programme universities from Macedonia (the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia) could also take part. From the Polish perspective it seems that incorporating universities from the post-Soviet area would be particularly useful.

In parallel with the growth of the Erasmus programme the foundations of the Bologna Process were being laid⁵. The name takes after the document signed by 29 countries in Bologna in June of 1999. In a certain sense, the Bologna process is a consequence of the experiences gained during the Erasmus programme since it transpired then that many European countries follow different university traditions in terms of the status of diplomas they award, the duration of study, division into semesters, forms of passing courses, and so on. The full mobility of students and staff was obstructed by the lack of compatibility between

³ See <http://erasmusmundus.org.pl/node/91> accessed 18 March 2013.

⁴ See <http://www.erasmus.org.pl/sites/erasmus.org.pl/files/Krotka%20historia%20programu%20Erasmus.pdf> accessed 18 March 2013.

⁵ J.-É. Charlier and S. Croché, *Le processus de Bologne, ses acteurs et leurs complices*, "Éducation et société" 2003, no. 2(12), p. 13. See also: Б. Зданюк, „Мобильность студентов и преподавателей в измерении Болонского процесса: опыт Варшавского Университета”, *Болонский образовательный процесс: теория, опыт, проблемы и перспективы*, Издательство Российского государственного социального университета, Москва 2011, pp. 60–61.

the organisation of the teaching process in the countries involved. Thus, the Bologna process was devised in order to tackle this very problem and harmonise the process of education across Europe. Three principle areas were targeted. First, the study period was to be divided into three stages: a (usually) three-year long BA period, two-year long MA period and three-/four-year long doctoral studies. Secondly, studies, subjects and course load were made comparable through the European Credit Transfer System, ECTS⁶. Finally, universities were obliged to provide, so-called, diploma supplements, wherein the education process, the names of the courses taken and grades were to be all included.

The Institute of Political Science, University of Warsaw, got involved in the Erasmus programme already in the 1990s. The first academics to realise the international exchange programmes were Prof. Grażyna Ulicka and Prof. Konstanty Adam Wojtaszczyk. Later on, at different stages of its development, other scholars contributed to the Erasmus programme, such as Prof. Stanisław Sulowski, Dr Marta Witkowska, Dr Anna Wierzchowska, Dr Andżelika Mirska, Dr Justyna Miecznikowska, Dr Urszula Kurcewicz, Dr Małgorzata Kaczorowska, Dr Anna Sroka and Dr Bartłomiej Zdaniuk.

The IPS started its international cooperation under the Erasmus programme by signing agreements with German universities: the Free University of Berlin, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) in Munich, Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, University of Potsdam, and the University of Konstanz. Altogether fifteen agreements were signed with higher education institutions in Germany and two in Austria, which include among others, the prestigious University of Tuebingen and the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt on the Oder River.

Next came educational institutions in French-speaking countries. The first IPS partner in this area was the Lyon Institute of Political Studies in 1999. This was followed by agreements with high ranking institutions such as the Free University of Brussels or Europe's largest political science academic centre, the Sciences Po, the Paris Institute of Political Science, and others, amounting to seven institutions in France and two in Belgium.

In terms of English-language universities in Western and Northern Europe, the IPS signed agreements on cooperation with Scandinavian universities based in Oslo, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Gothenburg and

⁶ M. Harfi and C. Mathieu, *Mobilité internationale et attractivité des étudiants et des chercheurs*, "Horizons stratégiques" 2006, no. 1(1), p. 36.

Tampere. Among British universities, the University of Sussex in Brighton is the one that works most closely with the IPS. Looking South, five universities in Italy – including the oldest university in Europe, the Bologna University – have been collaborating with the IPS, and nine in Spain, for instance, the Complutense University of Madrid and the University of Barcelona.

Poland's accession into the EU expanded the group of potential partners, adding new EU-members as well as new candidate states to the list. Very soon agreements were signed with the following: University of Bucharest, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Charles University in Prague, Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest (ELTE), Istanbul University and University of Latvia. IPS's partner institutions: University of Ljubljana and University of Malta have recently gained enormous popularity among the students.

Up to the year 2013 the IPS signed cooperation agreements with 68 universities from 29 countries which has made its study abroad offer particularly rich, while at the same time allowing for the hosting of students from the most diverse cultural environments. The number of IPS students participating in the Erasmus-LLP programme continued to increase up to the 2009/2010 academic year. In the early years of the operation of the programme several – up to a dozen or so students participated; in 2009/2010 – 70 students were qualified to study abroad. The number of students joining foreign universities for internships has been on the rise since 2007. The beginning of another trend has drawn our attention, namely the dwindling number of those interested in the Erasmus programme: in 2010 it dropped to 40. This is no doubt a sign of the global economic crisis affecting the financial status of today's young population.

There is a steady annual flow of about 50 students from the IPS partner institutions to study at the Institute of Political Science, a group made up of mostly Spanish, Germans and students from Central, Southern and Eastern Europe.

There has been a systematic rise in the number of IPS employees going to foreign universities for teaching assignments. Each year a dozen or so academics leave for Spain, Turkey, France, the Netherlands, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Romania. The Institute receives annually around ten foreign lecturers, mainly from France, Spain, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, as well as Turkey and Malta.

The biggest challenge for students and lecturers alike in developing cooperation of any sort between universities of the participating countries

is the command of foreign languages. This challenge is particularly acute for the University of Warsaw as Polish is not a language spoken internationally. While universities in major West European countries, such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Spain or Italy, are in a much better situation as they are entitled to expect that any incoming student or researcher is well versed in the language spoken in the country. The same is true for universities in Russia. This implies, therefore, that the effort of acquiring a foreign language must be made by the Polish side – which is what indeed has been happening. Since, no other foreign partner university offers courses in Polish, apart from the European University Viadrina, Polish students and academics had to adjust to existing conditions.

Both, European and world trends point to English being the first foreign language of choice for students. Accordingly, year after year the majority of all students opt for studying at universities where English is the language of instruction: the British Isles, Scandinavia or Malta. In the last couple of years growing numbers of students and staff have been more inclined to study in Central and Eastern Europe, while at the same time the numbers wishing to visit Scandinavia or even the UK started falling. Currently, more young people wish to study in the Czech Republic, Turkey than in Sweden or Finland.

The exchange of students and teaching staff with Germany, France, Italy and Spain, that is countries where English is less common or not spoken at all, even at institutions of higher learning, is a ‘challenge within a challenge’ of sorts. As already mentioned, any student mobility to speak of to those universities is possible only with the knowledge of the local language, which typically happens to be the second or third foreign language spoken by Polish students. For many potential candidates this is a hurdle hard to overcome, making universities based in these four ‘major’ countries less attractive to Polish students. But even here, new tendencies seem to be appearing. By the early 2000s, a dozen or so students annually would apply to study in Berlin, Munich or Vienna, thereby manifesting their command of German. Soon after, this number began to wane. For a short time Italian universities were the most ‘popular’. By the end of the 2000s the number of Polish students learning Spanish as a second language has gone up and, accordingly, the number of students applying to study in Spain went up. At the same time, the number of students with a good command of French remained stable throughout this period, roughly ten students, and the same number applied to study in France and Belgium each year.

An alarming trend has been noted since 2010, not confined to the Institute of Political Science, University of Warsaw, namely the falling numbers of young people declaring languages other than English (German, French or Spanish, and still less – Italian) as their second language. This is, possibly, prompted by a trend spreading among today's youth, namely, the uniformisation of cultural patterns, which de facto leaves no place for the richness of Europe's languages and leads to the erroneous conviction that it is totally sufficient to move in and about freely in Europe knowing one language alone – English.

It is important to note that the students coming to the IPS for their study-abroad programme at times find their language skills not up to scratch. They are expected to be fluent in English, but this is not always the case, especially amongst students from Mediterranean countries. At the same time, however, each year a steady number of students under the Erasmus programme come to the IPS with a knowledge of Polish. Most often than not, these are students of Polish descent; there are also some who have started learning Polish from the beginning and have achieved a relative mastery of the language. This group is comprised mostly of German students, for whom a good command of Polish can become useful in their prospective careers in corporations, foundations, lobby groups or working in an advisory capacity with German political personnel.

In no way do the problems explained above exhaust the topic of challenges facing the management of IPS and that of many other universities in Poland, as for instance, the internationalisation of the teaching offer. Student and staff mobility within the EU reveals a certain pattern. Following the initial surge of interest in the possibilities opened up by the mobility generated by the Erasmus programme, there followed a time of sober calculation. It transpired that universities began to fall into two groups: those which had more incoming students than outgoing ones, and those which experienced the opposite trend. As a result, higher education institutions began to behave in a more restrained manner in choosing their partners for cooperation. In this respect the main criterion became the usefulness of a given institution for mutual exchange rather than one-way mobility.

Continuing to attract new foreign partner institutions would never have been possible had the Institute of Political Science itself not become an attractive partner for foreign educational institutions. In other words, in order to be able to receive Polish IPS students, from the University of Warsaw, its potential partners had to gain confidence that they would be

able to send their students to the IPS, and that their sojourn would be considered highly valuable. This is a seminal contention in the context of the overcoming of barriers between the 'old' and the 'new' EU member states since students hailing from the 'new' member-states are decidedly more eager to visit an 'old' member-state than the other way round.

Two initiatives served the goal of enhancing the appeal of IPS: a short-term one, and a strategic one. The former was the annual convention of Erasmus-Programme coordinators in political science, international relations, public administration and management held in 2007⁷ at the University of Warsaw. This was a joint enterprise taken by the Institute of Political Science and Institute of International Relations, University of Warsaw. The invitation was accepted by more than 30 foreign universities, mostly from the 'old' member-states which had little understanding of the academic and organisational potential of the University of Warsaw. Their stay in Warsaw and being able to see the university for themselves made a favourable impression on them. In the wake of this meeting a rapid influx of cooperation agreements were signed with numerous renowned academic institutions. This was reflected in the statistics: growing numbers of Polish students were able to take up studies abroad.

Along with these promotional activities it was necessary to undertake strategic measures. The key decision in this respect was the introduction of courses taught in foreign languages into the teaching programme especially English. This was a reaction to the question often phrased by our foreign associates about the possibility of sending English-speaking students to Warsaw with no knowledge of Polish. Consequently, the teaching offer in foreign languages began growing steadily with currently roughly 200 class/lecture hours on offer per academic year.

In developing its didactic offer the management of the IPS took every effort to maintain its complementary nature in terms of the profile and subject matter of the courses. For this reason the IPS, apart from its own employees, also asked lecturers from other institutions, representatives of the state administration or foreign academics to teach at the institute. For many years, for instance, a seminar on Middle Eastern issues ('The Middle Eastern Scene') conducted by Professor Janusz Danecki has been very popular among students. Subjects focusing on Polish issues are taught by Dr Sławomir Józefowicz ('Polish Society and Politics – Main Issues and Controversies') and by Dr Małgorzata Kaczorowska ('Polish Politics since 1989'). An important problematic of political thought,

⁷ <http://www.erasmus-network.eu/meeting.html>, accessed 30 march 2013.

'Liberalism and the Challenges of Late Modernity', is discussed by Prof. Stanisław Filipowicz, corresponding member of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The course taught by Prof. Agnieszka Rothert 'Networks in Politics' addresses new research areas in the study of politics. Courses taught by representatives of the Polish public administration examine what lies at the heart of Polish foreign policy and related matters, such as 'Does Poland have a National Security Policy?' a course conducted by Ambassador Adam Kobieracki, or Dr Jarosław **Ćwiek-Karpowicz** ('Politics in Russia. A Central European Perspective').

Amongst foreign academics who delivered lectures in foreign languages were the following academics: Dr Hans Wassmund ('Globalisation – Democratisation – Global Governance'), Prof. Wei Lichun ('Ancient Chinese Culture and Modern China Framework'), Dr Christopher Kortzen ('European Religious History since Napoleon') or Dr Jérôme Heurtaux ('Sociologie de la vie politique française'). Mention must also be made of foreign lecturers who come to the IPS for short visits under the Erasmus Lifelong Learning Programme and conduct courses in international languages. In this category is a group of staff members from the Institute of Political Studies in Lyon (Prof. Vincent Michelot, Dr Michel Boyer and others) and lecturers from the Universities in Prague, Nijmegen, Malta, Bern, Banská Bystrica, Madrid and Brussels. Research workers and lecturers from Ivano-Frankovsk and Donetsk visit the IPS under bilateral agreements.

With a view to increasing the appeal of the IPS among foreign students one course is taught in German (by Prof. Stanisław Sulowski and Prof. Krzysztof Miszczak: 'Deutsch-Polnische Beziehungen nach dem II Weltkrieg: Konflikt – Verständigung – Zusammenarbeit') and one in Spanish (Dr Anna Sroka: 'Los países de Europa Central y Oriental en el proceso de la integración europea'). The choice of language and subject was intentional since the majority of incoming Erasmus students to study at the IPS come from Spain and Germany.

The mobility of teaching staff into and from the IPS remains at a relatively stable figure of a dozen or so. In an analysis of the barriers preventing growth in that area we come across structural conditioning. According to the rules laid down in the Erasmus programme lecturers' visits to foreign universities can take place only with the objective of delivering lectures for a short duration, usually a couple of days. The basic difficulty involves funds. The grants teachers receive, especially for travelling do not always cover all the costs they have to incur. Furthermore, a several-days' absence from the University of Warsaw at a time when

regular course-work is taking place is another major disadvantage. Again, partner institutions admit that they would be in favour of accepting lecturers for a longer spat of time, a month for instance, which would allow for running a full-time 30 hour course ending with an exam and grade in the student's documents. Thus, it seems necessary to modify the rules governing this matter on the Community level. Raising the expenditure on costs of travel and stay and extending the length of stay up to four weeks surely would increase the mobility of academic staff.

Attention must be drawn here to the numerous advantages that the Erasmus programme affords students, lecturers and the universities themselves. The key advantage from the students' perspective is the opportunity of interacting with another cultural environment⁸. Not only can they improve their skills in the language of the host country, but also, or even above all else, during a stay at a foreign institution they are confronted with different methods of work, instruction and grading system. They are forced to think in a new reality, confront different ways of thinking manifested not only by the local population of the host country but also by all the other foreigners studying at the host university. Studying abroad promotes the students' interest in the world; makes them aware that a richer palette of cause-and-effect unions is possible than the one they have grown used to⁹. All these factors put together increase the students' ability to work in an international environment, their flexibility and ability to consider a wider range of factors. In other words, the Erasmus programme increases the students' employability and job prospects¹⁰. It transpired in practice that only when studying abroad do students become aware of the need of studying foreign languages, other than English. A foreign language is not only a vehicle for communicating which – in the upper circles of European societies – can be served by the common knowledge of English. A language is a conveyor of a specific culture; the phrasal constructions – often beyond

⁸ В. Борисов and Б. Зданюк, *Проблеми модернізації вищої освіти та її вплив на ідентичність*, [in:] *Інтеграція системи вищої освіти України до загальноєвропейського освітнього простору*, Рівне 2006, p. 54.

⁹ I. Wilson, *What Should We Expect of 'Erasmus Generations?*, "JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies" 2011, no. 49, pp. 1113–1140.

¹⁰ M. Parey and F. Waldinger, *Studying Abroad and the Effect on International Labour Market Mobility: Evidence from the Introduction of ERASMUS*, "The Economic Journal" 2011, no. 121, pp. 194–222. C. Guillaume and S. Pochic, *Mobilité internationale et carrières des cadres: figure imposée ou pari risqué?*, "Formation emploi" 2010, no. 112, octobre–décembre, p. 40.

translation – reflect social phenomena typical for that society alone. Acquiring this language, this local tongue, allows for freely engaging with the local population on all levels and forging new inter-personal bonds¹¹.

The same can be said of the teaching staff. Visiting academic institutions in other countries which participate in the programme allows for upgrading their professional skills and qualifications. Teaching students who have a different knowledge load, archetypes and ways of thinking, teaching in a different language to one's own, is for the instructor some challenge, indeed. Engaging in an exchange of views and ideas with the students of the host institution often broadens the intellectual horizons of the lecturers thus enriching their teaching experience, often inducing them to employ new teaching methods at their own institution on return. This experience can be used for other educational or research projects. Opportunities of working together on joint publications, conferences and other means of disseminating knowledge naturally spring up.

The exchange of staff and students between universities benefits the institutions themselves. Firstly, as was explained already, by accepting foreigners the host institution is obliged to internationalise its own teaching offer. It has to organise the smooth servicing of incoming and outgoing students. It must ensure that there are lecturers familiar with the international environment, as well as back up facilities and well-stocked libraries. These are all factors which contribute to the improvement of the quality of teaching at universities – so important in the context of the Bologna process and new conditions affecting higher education.

Staff and student mobility leads to the growing prestige of the university and all its individual units, thus generating 'an added value' in the short- and long-term. Incoming students witness the methods of work of the host country and then share their insights at their universities. The 'snow-ball' effect was noted many times when satisfied students not only encouraged their colleagues to visit Warsaw but also pointed to the high level of the classes, lectures, teaching expertise, facilities, libraries and the like. Information of this sort generates new interest among foreign partners in the host university, the IPS in this case, which easily translates into new joint teaching or research ventures¹². A favourable impression gained during a student's visit lingers on for

¹¹ A. de Federico, *Amitiés européennes. Les réseaux transnationaux des étudiants Erasmus*, "Informations sociales" 2008, no. 3(147), p. 121.

¹² С.В. Борисова and Б. Зданюк, *Визначення шляхів розвитку вищої професійної освіти в Україні*, „Проблеми освіти. Науково-методичний збірник”, випуск 2007/52, p. 23.

many years, thus even in a long-term perspective when students become part of political, economic and cultural elites of their countries the host-country's reputation is bound to spread far and wide. Considering Poland's demographic crisis this makes attracting students from other countries not only a possibility but a necessity as well.

In conclusion one might say that participating in the Erasmus Lifelong Learning Programme is for all its participants, students, lecturers and academic institutions alike, an important investment for the future. The experience accumulated by the Institute of Political Science over a dozen or so years demonstrates that it is a profitable investment. The ability to take advantage of the rich study abroad offer under the Erasmus programme is for some high-school graduates a key incentive to take up studies at the IPS, at the University of Warsaw. IPS staff benefit from their experience gained at foreign universities while foreign students have learnt to see the Institute of Political Science as a major academic centre in Europe.

ABSTRACT

Participating in the Erasmus Lifelong Learning Programme is for all its participants, students, lecturers and academic institutions alike, an important investment for the future. The experience accumulated by the Institute of Political Science over a dozen or so years demonstrates that it is a profitable investment. The ability to take advantage of the rich study abroad offer under the Erasmus programme is for some high-school graduates a key incentive to take up studies at the IPS, at the University of Warsaw. IPS staff benefit from their experience gained at foreign universities while foreign students have learnt to see the Institute of Political Science as a major academic centre in Europe.

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