

The University of Miskolc, Hungary

WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION OF YOUR UNIVERSITY'S INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT?

The University of Miskolc is one of the oldest universities in Hungary. Founded as a mining school – and, at the same time, the first technical HE institution in Europe – in Selmecbánya in 1735, it looks back on a glorious past and boasts a dynamic present. Although forced to move its location to different towns because of the tribulations of history, first to Sopron in 1919 with the Faculties of Mining and Metallurgical Engineering, then to Miskolc in 1949 adding the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering to the former two, it has never ceased to be in the vanguard of the country's higher education. The university formally became the University of Miskolc in 1990. Since then, it has steadily developed into an institution of real *universitas* character by launching taught programmes in law, economics, humanities, teacher training, music education and health care studies in addition to the traditional engineering programmes.

The mission of the university is formed by a combination of major insights, commitments, values and efforts: the establishment and maintenance of an integrated HE institution that meets the standards of the age by producing well-trained and highly qualified professionals, and by active participation in the scientific and social life of the nation and the world. The university is committed to the continuous adjustment in the contents and structure of its academic programmes to respond the global and European developments in HE. The university is committed to establishing priorities in professional and scientific training to promote Hungarian and global cultural values, to be tolerant towards national differences, to explore and utilise the specific opportunities arising from its geographical location.

The University of Miskolc has always been the basis to realise endeavours in HE activities in the region. The university has also succeeded in changing its internal structures in response to market demands.

The widespread international relations of the university have both narrowed and broadened during the past decade. Previous relationships (mainly with countries in Eastern Europe) have been transformed or, in some cases, ceased. On the other hand, broadening has taken place through the growing number of partner institutions in Western Europe in the form of joint international projects and bilateral agreements. These agreements, mounting to more than 60 and based on co-operation contracts, play an utmost important role in the international relations of the university. This is the way for us to take part in the blood circulation of the international scientific and educational life. They also have an effect on the development strategy of the university, as the international trends should be taken into consideration. The agreements lay down the main tendencies of research, which influence the standard and structure of education, too. The major forms of international relations are as follows:

- exchange of information, professional literature, teaching materials, technical books
- joint research, elaboration and submission of projects

- participation in international conferences, events, giving lectures and presentations
- short visits and scholarship-funded study trips
- student exchange, summer practice, study trips
- receiving visitors, visiting professors
- participation in the work of international organisations.

As soon as opportunities became available, the University of Miskolc did not hesitate to join the major European educational and research projects (TEMPUS, CEEPUS, SOCRATES, LEONARDO, NATO, 4th and 5th Framework Programmes, EUREKA, etc.). A wide-ranging partner network has come to life, which will serve as a firm basis to realise our future objectives.

As Hungary is at the threshold of the EU-accession, special attention and priority has been attributed to following the norms set by the EU. A Work Committee has been formed from the representatives of the universities – the University of Miskolc being among them – to work out proposals for the realisation of the tasks demanded by the Bologna Declaration.

The university is convinced that its strengths (long historical traditions in education, highly qualified and experienced teaching staff, vivid international relations, successful participation in international projects, an ever-transforming training structure and educational profile meeting the demands of a rapidly changing world, flexible university management, quality assurance) will soon surmount some weaknesses that still exist (not enough courses offered in foreign languages, shortcomings in infrastructure and IT, postponed introduction of ECTS, low number of students speaking foreign languages at high level), but will hopefully be eliminated in the coming years.

GIVEN THE STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF YOUR UNIVERSITY'S PRESENT SITUATION, DEFINE YOUR UNIVERSITY'S AIMS AND PRIORITIES FOR 2003/2004 – 2006/2007 WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON PROMOTING ACTIVITIES IN THE SOCRATES PROGRAMME. DESCRIBE BRIEFLY HOW THE EPS HAS BEEN DEVELOPED AND HOW IT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED AT YOUR INSTITUTION

It is essential for the University of Miskolc to define clear, realistic aims and priorities for the forthcoming period, and to continuously revise them if necessary. The university is strongly committed to preserve the strengths described above and to reduce weaknesses to a great extent. The realisation of the aims will make the university an equal member in the community of European universities.

These aims and priorities are as follows:

- to improve the language command of our students and teaching staff
- to create the possibility of launching taught programmes in foreign languages (both for Hungarian and foreign students)
- to join the European Credit Transfer System
- to improve the international character of our curricula by integrating state-of-the-art Information and Communication Technologies
- to offer a greater variety of taught programmes (two-tier programmes, in particular; distance and adult education; post-graduate courses)

- to raise our competitiveness and appeal in the field of international education and research
- to encourage our students to take up the European Studies course and to offer this course to other target groups outside the university
- to apply quality assurance in education to a greater extent
- to preserve the standard of degrees

These general principles for the future absolutely coincide with priorities in the SOCRATES programme. The University of Miskolc has maintained contacts with a great number of European universities in the framework of ERASMUS in the past few years. Primarily, it is the traditional engineering faculties that have been taking part with their partners in the programme, so it is essential to encourage the departments of other faculties too to join the mobility activities and to bring their partners into the programme, so that the university can exchange students and staff in a wider scale of subject areas. These new relationships will enjoy priority. Priority will also be granted to staff exchanges which cover other activities in addition to teaching and enhance the university's joining CD projects. The achievements of the development of new fields of science must be present in education in an internationally unified form. It is desirable to raise the number of outgoing students in order to enable them to meet the challenges of the European labour market after graduation. We will involve more students not only in mobility activities, but will also make them participate in other international projects and practical placements abroad. Much more efforts will be made to attract foreign students to the university, to offer them suitable courses in foreign languages and to guarantee the mutual recognition of studies. In the previous years, the three engineering faculties worked out 5-year degree programmes in English, which were originally meant for foreign fee-paying students. However, the revision of these courses in contents and structure is necessary. The new course curricula will help to change the unfavourable proportion of incoming/outgoing students. We will raise the awareness of our teaching staff of how important the participation in mobility activities, joint curriculum development, research and joint international projects is. We will find the necessary incentives to encourage them to have individual self-study plans for refreshing and developing their language proficiency. The university has highly-qualified administrative staff in its International Relations Office, who give considerable background support to all international activities.

The University of Miskolc has been participating in two other actions (LINGUA, MINERVA) of the SOCRATES programme and we think that this is the right way for us to go in the future. We will find broader opportunities of cooperation in these fields, as conditions to promote these two actions are created: several English and German language departments, a Language Centre, highly-qualified language teachers and a degree programme of English and German language teacher training. Similarly, DE will face a bright future since the North-Hungarian Regional Distance Education Centre has been established at the university.

The university is strongly concerned with contributing to the Europe of Knowledge and its cultural and scientific traditions. The Bologna Declaration is a guiding principle for us in defining the main objectives to be obtained. The Hungarian government is committed to raise the number of students in higher education, up to 50% of the 18-23 age group by 2010. It calls for reforming the structure and transforming it into a

two-tier system by strengthening both the theoretical grounding and the practice-oriented technical background. The nation-wide introduction of the ECTS in 2003 will bring the transparency, the compatibility and the mutual recognition of studies.

The Institutional Development Plan, which is a solid basis of the EPS, was worked out by the top management of the university and approved by the University Senate. The implementation of its objectives is a must and obligation for the university to be able to keep up with the European norms in the post-accession period from 2004, in particular. The Pro-Rectors in charge of the different activity areas of the university will take the responsibility – in close cooperation with the Deans of the faculties – to follow up the realisation of the aims and to recommend modifications if necessary.

HOW WILL YOUR INSTITUTION ENSURE HIGH QUALITY IN STUDENT AND STAFF MOBILITY AND IN ERASMUS CO-OPERATION?

We intend to lay more emphasis on and to strengthen the objectivity of selection criteria in student and staff mobility. The range of criteria should be broadened by taking into account more parameters. Selection procedures will be monitored regularly, with special regard to language skills. The Erasmus study programme of students will be discussed, approved and controlled at faculty level, too. This also applies to outgoing staff: the teaching materials they are going to present at partner universities will go through a faculty-level approving procedure, thus guaranteeing the high standard of teaching. We will encourage our staff to find specific topics which are not very familiar, but can be complementary, to the basic curricula, in different subject areas at the partner universities. We would like to strengthen the unique character of what we can offer to foreign students. Examples already exist: the course in Intercultural Communication worked out by the staff of the Department of Applied Linguistics is very popular and a recurrent topic at our partner universities each year; or the course in Hungarian Grammar and Cultural Studies taught by our staff at a Finnish university in the Finnish and Hungarian languages. To raise the number of staff in mobility is inevitable, however, financial constraints have prevented us from giving more opportunities in mobility activities to our staff. Yet, the university – as an enterprising university – will do its best endeavours to find additional sources.

We are aware that we must improve the unfavourable balance of incoming/outgoing statistics. It is important for us not just to send, but also to receive more and more students and staff. We need to be known, to exchange experience and to have intellectual contribution to our education from our partners. The nation-wide introduction of ECTS from September 2003 will hopefully give a leap forward in terms of competitiveness and the mutual recognition of studies. It will be easier for our students to compile a study programme and to take up more course units. The management of faculties will take the necessary measures to make the departments work out and launch more courses in foreign languages, primarily in English, where Hungarian and foreign students can study together, to make a better use of the language potential of the teaching staff. It will be the task of the departments to promote incoming staff mobility and to encourage the staff of the partner departments, in most cases on the basis of long-standing good relationships, to bring their knowledge and experience to us.

Though the university has not yet been involved in other ERASMUS actions, some positive changes which can continue with participating in CD and EM projects are already visible. We will definitely fortify our position in these new areas, relying on the huge experience of our teaching staff in working out teaching materials, which is based on several previous TEMPUS CD projects. Recently, some of the partner universities have expressed their intention to work with us, which has been received with positive reactions by the relevant departments.

Improving the quality of mobility activities will be supported by the Project Network (both an office and its services) and the Quality Assurance Office. The Project Network is an easily accessible information system – with its own web-page - on the most significant educational and research projects the University of Miskolc is taking part in. The ERASMUS section is available in English version, too. The project managers will regularly monitor the implementation of the projects and will be supervised by Pro-Rector of International Relations, who will submit reports and recommendations to the University Senate for approval and assessment in view of the long-term development strategy.

The principle of equal chances, equal treatment and no discrimination as for sex, race, religion and social status is the university's firm standpoint. Statistics show that the university has a growing number of female students and this circumstance is reflected in the proportion of male/female outgoing ERASMUS students, too. The university has a special advisory service for physically handicapped students and will give the utmost help to the physically or socially disadvantaged, both in terms of humane treatment and financial support. The latter is prompted by the fact that the town and its region is an economically depressed area, with high unemployment rate and a great number of students with poor social background.